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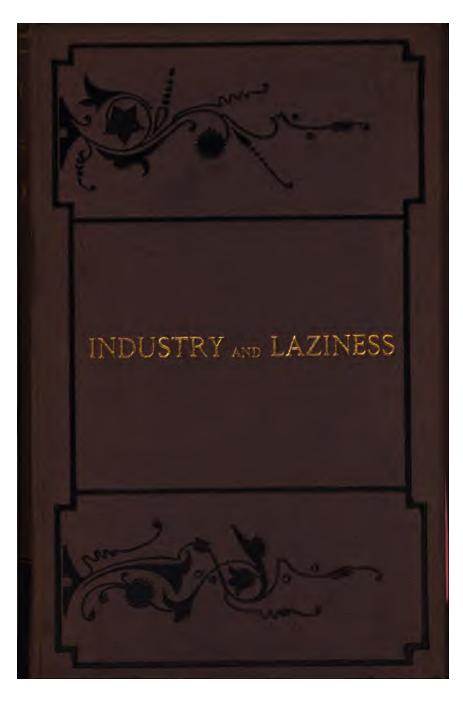
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# INDUSTRY AND LAZINESS.

### A Tale.

BY FRANZ HOFFMAN.

#### Translated from the German

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## INDUSTRY AND LAZINESS.

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#### CHAPTER I.

JACK AND JOHN.

STILL, gloomy night at the latter end of summer still covered the earth with thick darkness. The

moon had not long set, as a faintly-glimmering star in the western horizon revealed. In the east, a dim gleaming of the sky showed that the sun was about to rise, but that some time might still elapse ere it streamed forth its beaming light in full splendour on the world. A thousand stars sparkled, bright and clear, in the deep black sky, and were only here and there veiled by light clouds, which moved slowly over them.

A deep silence still reigned in the industrious, busy town of Sheffield. The numerous high chimneys of the factories, which by day sent forth uninterrupted clouds of black vapour, towered like spectres into the air, resembling the obelisks of distant Egypt, and could scarcely be distinguished in the dark shadow of the gloom. No glimmer of a light glanced cheerfully from the windows of the houses; everybody was still sleeping in quiet, refreshing slumber after the toil and labour of the past day. The rich manufacturer, as well as the poor workman, the mistress of the house, as well as the active maid, were all still resting on soft or hard pillow, and invigorating themselves for the business of the coming The dogs were sleeping in their kennels, the swallows and sparrows in their nests; even the lively little redstart, which is usually one of the first to greet the day, had not yet commenced its sprightly chirping, but kept its little head still hidden under its wing, and slept or dreamed, like every other creature.

Strangely still and quiet lay the empty streets and squares. No step, no noise of

any kind was audible; even the night-watch, whose duty should have prompted him to keep his eyes open, sat on a curb-stone under an arched gateway, leaned his head and back on a corner, and gently slumbered. His hands rested on his lap, his rattle hung down slack at his side, and his strong, iron-tipped staff leaned, listless as himself, near him on the gateway. He had watched almost the whole night, and might think, as morn was now near, that nothing further would occur to necessitate his vigilance. He slept, and his shaggy-haired dog lay at his feet, stretched at full length, its head with its pointed snout between its forelegs, apparently in refreshing slumber.

Now a gentle wind rose, and rustled with a low whisper through the streets, like a warning voice, that every one should be on his guard, for the night is not yet past, and may still conceal much mischief in its dark bosom. But no one heard this voice; it died off in a low rustling, and all was perfectly still as before. The night-watch moved not, and slept on quietly. The large houses and long streets

echoed neither step nor sound. Only in one little house quite at the end of the town did it seem as if life would again awake. A poor, mean, wretched little house it was, and still poorer, meaner, and more wretched did it look by the side of its next neighbour, a high, stately building, which raised itself like a giant over the little hut. And, in truth, it was but a very small hut, with tiny, narrow windows, through which one could scarcely stretch out one's head. But behind these windows there now flashed up, as it were, a glimmering of light. Several times the feeble kindling was renewed, as if from sparks which flew out from steel and flint, then darkness again prevailed for a short time; but at last a soft, continued brightness shone through the small panes, and told, as plainly as in words, that within the hut a candle or a lamp was lit.

Almost at the same time—perhaps even a little earlier—there showed itself also on the roof of a long and large house situated not very far from the hut, a feeble, scarcely perceptible glimmer of light. But this came not out of a window or a door, but seemed to

issue immediately from under the roof. yet there was no chimney there, which could account for the strange appearance. The roof stretched for a long distance and in a straight line, which was unbroken by any elevation. It belonged, doubtless, to a factory, the spacious rooms of which, full of looms or woollen yarn engines, stood now empty of people in the night, and were animated only by day during the hours of work. then, could be the meaning of this glimmering light, which so mysteriously burst forth from the top of the roof, quite feeble, scarcely perceptible, like a phosphoric gleam, as it sometimes streams round a dark thundercloud.

But here were no thunder-clouds; the stars still sparkled in pure brightness down from the dark sky, and smiled with friendly eye on the slumbering earth.

No, this was no thunder-cloud. But see! Other clouds became visible, or really only little clouds—very small, dark little clouds—which, like the gleaming, rose and issued forth between the tiles of the roof, lowering like a

stratum of mist by degrees over the top. A light gust of wind suddenly carried them off. Still again and again the little clouds pressed forth from the roof, wreathed, expanded themselves, inclined here and there, and brooded again like a veil of mist over the roof. Gradually also the glimmering became brighter and brighter, and now there darted something like a glittering flash just out of the roof, and a bright light was emitted from the clouds, so that they, at least for a few moments, were clearly visible. But no one had seen them. The night-watch was reclining in quiet slumber under the gateway, and through his closed eyelids the glare of a real flash of lightning would scarcely have penetrated.

Meantime the flash that had quivered up was again extinguished, and, as before, only a faint, weak light glimmered over the roof.

In the little hut, the windows of which were still brightened with a cheerful light, the door now opened, and a boy, only half-dressed, stepped out into the darkness. Although his form was scarcely to be recognised in the feeble starlight and the yet more feeble morning twilight, still the light of the lamp was reflected on him from the interior of the hut, as he left the door open behind him, and stood for a moment on the threshold.

He was a slender, comely boy of about fourteen years of age. He held in his hand a large pitcher, with which he probably intended to draw water at the neighbouring fountain, whose murmuring and splashing resounded softly in the still night. Yet he was in no great hurry about the affair, but tarried awhile on the threshold of the door, peering with his bright eyes up to the heavens and out into the darkness.

"It is still early, very early," he murmured to himself in a low tone. "The moon there has just set, and scarcely a trace of the sun shows itself. I might have slept a short hour longer. But what matters it? An hour earlier up is an hour's work gained; and mother will be glad, when she gets up, to see that I have been industrious and have earned a few pence. Briskly, then, to the fountain, fetch the water,

wash, finish dressing, and afterwards set to work."

He went on his way to the fountain, and now his eye caught the light which shone flickering on the roof of the not far distant building.

"What is that?" he exclaimed, startled, and stood still. "It cannot be the moon, for she has sunk yonder under the horizon. What can it be?"

With eager attention, his eye was fixed on the feeble glimmer, and on the grey little clouds which hovered over the roof, and were now on a sudden again transiently illuminated by a flash that darted up. He started with terror.

"Fire! that is fire!" said he, quite loud.
"Fire in the large wool-spinning factory of Mr. Westmore! Not the slightest doubt; it can be nothing else. Then I must awaken the people before it is too late."

Quickly, and yet cautiously, in order not to break it, he placed his large earthen pitcher aside, and then flew, with the swiftness of a bird, in the direction of the imperilled building, screaming with the whole power of his voice:

"Fire ho! fire ho!"

He heeded not whether he was heard. On, on he sped, and continually repeated his cry of alarm, till he stopped, panting for breath, before the house of the wealthy manufacturer, which was not far distant from the menaced factory.

"Fire, Mr. Westmore!" he screamed, at the same time pulling so violently at the house-bell, that its shrill sound pierced through all the rooms of the house. "Fire! Wake up! Perhaps it is still possible to rescue all from the flames."

"Where is the fire? Who is screaming here?" inquired a rough voice from a window thrown open in the upper story.

"On your property, sir!" answered the boy.
"I am Jack Bridewell, the son of the poor widow who works for you. For God's sake, sir, delay not, for the flames are already quivering through the roof, and will soon burst forth in full force if they are not quickly and vigorously checked."

The head which had peeped out of the window soon again disappeared, and immediately after Jack heard a loud screaming and calling in the house.

"All right; they are warned, and will soon be alert, so that I am not required here," said he. "Now off to the alarm-bell!"

And on he ran again in full speed; and ere the lapse of four minutes, the peal of the alarm-bell sounded shrilly through the town, and with an unwelcome morning salute, called forth the slumberers from their beds.

The night-watch also at last awoke, and hastened to make amends for his neglect of duty. The blasts of his horn resounded shrill and wild through the streets; and now the multitude streamed forth from all the houses, hurrying to the scene of the conflagration, which had already become conspicuous through a radiance shining afar.

The deathlike stillness was soon dispelled by a noisy activity. The pealing of the bells, the blast of the watchmen, the shouting and hubbub of the men, the quick tramping of the galloping horses, the rattling and puffing of the fire-engines travelling up from different directions, occasioned a bewildering tumult.

Jack concerned himself but little about all this din. After he had, with so favourable a result, set the alarm-bell tolling, he ran back as fast as he could to the burning factory, and arrived there just at the moment at which the flame, gaining the upper hand, burst through the roof, and a mighty pillar of fire blazed up to the still dark heavens.

A multitude of men crowded round the spot; yet all stood bewildered, and scarce anything was done to arrest the progress of the flames, for, although there was no lack of engines, the supply of water was insufficient to fill them. The contents of the water-casks, which were brought up speedily on sledges, did not go far; there was no flowing water—not a rivulet or a stream near—and the nearest fountain was also a considerable distance off. It is true that a chain was formed by two rows of men, who passed to each other the pails filled at the fountain, so that, transmitted from hand to hand, they reached the engines;

but that, too, was insufficient to afford effectual aid.

Mr. Westmore stood bewildered in front of the burning building, and observed with gloomy sadness the progress of the devouring element, which threatened to destroy his whole property.

"No exertion can save the building, if more water is not procured," he murmured to himself, almost hopelessly.

Jack, who stood very near him, had heard the words, and suddenly recollected a circumstance, which in the first bewilderment no one had thought of. Some time before, the subterranean conduit-pipes, which extended their ramifications over the whole of the town, and supplied it with flowing water, had in various places been repaired, and Jack had on those occasions often watched the workmen. Just in the neighbourhood of the factory there happened to be one of those places opened at one of those times, and again filled up, and by chance Jack still remembered the spot very accurately.

"Mr. Westmore," said he, turning quickly

to the owner of the factory, "if water is the only thing that is wanting, that can be obtained within ten minutes in superabundance. Here, twenty paces from the spot where you are standing, a main of the conduit lies. Give orders to tear up the pavement, and the large pipe five feet under ground must come to light. Only a piece needs be taken out of it, and the water will flow like a river."

"That is a capital idea!" exclaimed Mr. Westmore with animation. "Whereabouts is the spot, boy?"

"Here!" answered Jack, stamping on it with his foot.

"Very well, very well!" said Mr. Westmore.
"Here, people!" he called out to the multitude.
"Bring pickaxes and shovels, my friends!
Tear open the ground here! Quick, quick!
No great damage has yet been done, and all can be saved if we do not loiter."

"The conduit! right! the conduit!" shouted numerous voices at the same time. "We did not think of that; that may be of use. Here with pickaxes and shovels, and willing hands!" When they came to look round, all that they required was at hand. Mr. Westmore himself seized a pickaxe, and eagerly helped to tear up and remove the street pavement. Jack, too, did not remain an idle spectator; and twenty or thirty robust workmen, chiefly from the factory of Mr. Westmore, set to work at the same time. Earth and stones flew around; after a few minutes they fortunately found the conduit; from which the water now streamed forth in such excess that in a trice it filled up the whole aperture and overflowed the edges.

A sucking-pump was now applied. There was no lack of strong, willing hands to work it, and immediately an unbroken, powerful jet of water rushed into the midst of the hissing flames, which vainly raged against the hostile element, and in a short half-hour were obliged to succumb to it. The fire was quenched, and a joyous hurrah from the whole assembled multitude resounded up to the morning sky.

Heavily breathing, Jack stood [near the engine, at which he had rendered aid to the

best of his power, and wiped with his shirtsleeve the pearly drops from his glowing forehead and burning cheeks.

"What a fool you are to fatigue yourself thus," said a derisive voice close to him.

Jack turned quickly round, and saw an elegantly-dressed boy of his own age, who was surveying him with a scornful look. One could easily see that he had not moved even a finger in the menacing peril. His clothes were in perfect order, his hands as clean as if freshly washed, and his forehead as dry as a withered leaf.

"Is it you, John?" answered Jack. "Well, it wouldn't have hurt you if you had helped a little. The danger was really very great."

"To be just such a fool as you," replied John, and turned up his nose. "What matters it to me if the factory is burnt down?"

"Would you speak thus if your father's factory were on fire?" answered Jack. "In time of need we must assist each other to the best of our power."

"That would not be necessary with us," responded John haughtily. "We require no help

from strangers; our factory is insured, and the insurance would cover all damage."

"That would indeed help your father," replied Jack; "but what would become of his poor workmen if during the standstill they should be suddenly deprived of their bread? Fie, John! how can you speak so heartlessly?"

"Pooh!" answered the young lad. "If I can only enjoy my own ease, I don't concern myself much about other people. What have you got by working till you are quite tired? Not that much!"

He snapped his fingers in the air, and laughed scornfully.

"And is the consciousness of having done one's duty faithfully to be accounted as nought?" rejoined Jack. "It would be sad, John, if one wished always to work only for reward and lucre."

"Ay, I would rather not work at all; working is so tiresome," replied the young man. "Besides, it is unnecessary for me to do so. My father is rich; we leave work for those who are obliged to live by it."

"But poverty can come out of wealth, as wealth out of poverty," said Jack thoughtfully. "Recollect, John, how only last year the very wealthy Mr. Smith suddenly became as poor as a beggar. That happened in the turn of a hand; and the unhappy man, who had been master of tons of gold, died a wretched death in the workhouse. And what was the cause of all this? Because, from idleness, he neglected his business, and confided the management of it to strangers, who deceived and robbed him."

"No; it came from his being an ass, and not understanding anything of business," answered John. "That I ought to know, for I had it from the mouth of my father, who was well acquainted with Mr. Smith."

"Yes, and also, like the rest of his friends, left the poor man in the lurch when misfortune came upon him," interposed a strange voice, and an old man, whose whole appearance testified that he had stoutly aided in the extinguishing of the fire, raised himself near the young men from the ground. "I have heard all that you have said," continued he, as

they both stared at him in astonishment; "and what I have heard does not surprise me, as I have known you both a long time. Bridewell, to you I say, continue in the path in which you are walking, for it will lead you to a good end. But you, John Collins, who brag and swagger about the riches of your father, and spend your days in sloth and idleness, reflect and change; think of the wise saying of Solomon: 'The slothful hand hath wrought poverty, but the hand of the industrious getteth riches.' And makes rich, not in money and goods alone, but, above all, rich in inward happiness, in contentment with one's self, and in peace with God. Think of that, young man, and remember that every living creature has been created by God to fulfil his duty; and this consists, not in indolence and sloth, but in useful activity and righteous industry. Reflect, John Collins, I say to you, or the end of your career will be as sad as that of Jack Bridewell will be rich in peace and honour."

Before either of the young people could give an answer, the old man turned short round, cast towards John a sharp, admonitory glance, and vanished amidst the crowd of people, who now, when there was no further danger to be apprehended, gradually dispersed, to betake themselves to their wonted daily occupations.

"Who was that old fool?" said John at last, looking inquiringly at Jack.

"Don't you know him?" replied the latter.

"It was old Mark Nicolls—only a man in humble circumstances, for he is but a factory workman; nevertheless, people give him the reputation of being wise and knowing more of the world than most other men."

"He is an impudent fellow, with his stupid chatter," said John, in an irritated tone. "Were he in my father's factory, I would take away his wages and bread. What right had he to interfere in our conversation? I fancy I know how I ought to act and conduct myself."

"But, at any rate, he meant well," answered Jack; "and his counsels appear to me really not bad. Yes, I even maintain that the old man is quite right—perfectly right!"

"Yes, of course you will say so; for all you workpeople hold together and play upon the same string," replied John contemptuously. "However, what suits you does not suit all, and least of all me. What are you poor people for but to work for us rich ones? So work; and we—well, we look on, and enjoy life. That is the whole of the matter."

Thus saying, he turned his back on the honest Jack, and lounged slowly away. Jack looked back at him thoughtfully.

"Be it as it may," he muttered to himself after a while, "I do really believe that old Mark is right. I am contented and enjoy my rest in the evening only when I have worked industriously during the day. So I will follow his advice. What would become of my poor mother if I, like John, were to throw myself into the arms of idleness. Idleness is the beginning of all vices; that is quite true; and I perceive it in John, whom I have never seen do anything sensible. Well, certainly his father is rich, and he can do as he likes; but still, were I in his place, I am sure I should

not be so lazy. John says that working is tiresome; well, I think, on the contrary, that nothing is more tiresome than idle loitering and lounging. I experienced that when, last year, I was sick and unable to do anything. Every hour passed away as slowly as if it had been a whole week; and, on the contrary, when I am thoroughly industrious, often in the evening I am surprised that the day has so quickly glided by. Yes, old Mark is right, and I will persevere in my habits."

In confirmation of this resolve, he nodded his head several times, then fetched a deep breath, and, with his bright, lustrous eyes, cast a glance over the scene of the conflagration. It still, indeed, smoked, and thick clouds of whitish vapour hovered over the blackened rafters of the roof; but the fire was quenched, and if only moderate precaution were used, could not again blaze up.

"I am no longer of any use here, and can then go home," said Jack to himself. "Mother will have been surprised at not having found me when she got up. But she will easily imagine where I was; and what has been neglected in the house I can soon make amends for. So briskly off."

Fleet as a roe, he scampered away, and had after a few minutes reached the little hut, where immediately after he might have been seen assiduously busied with various occupations.

Jack was fully resolved to be an industrious little lad; and that he was in reality, for not only his mother, but likewise all the neighbours, gave him this honourable testimony.

#### CHAPTER II.

"THOU SHALT KEEP HOLY THE SABBATH-DAY."

HE sunshine lay bright and glistening on the earth, when, on the next Sunday after the fire, the bells chimed in the steeples of the town, and their festive sounds were heard afar, till they died away in the extreme distance in trembling vibrations. Throughout the town reigned a still repose, which strangely, but agreeably contrasted with the customary noisy business of the weekdays, when the steam-engines panted and roared, the looms rattled, and the anvils groaned under the weight of mighty hammers.

The town, too, wore quite a different appearance from that which it exhibited on the

busy work-days. Then the streets were enlivened by workmen, who, in jackets, leather aprons, or sooty blouses, with hands and faces blackened with coal-dust and steam, went to their work, or returned from it, whilst today only neatly-dressed and cleanly-washed people were walking through the streets or sitting at the open windows, and quietly enjoying recreation and rest. Here and there the space before the doors of the houses was strewed with fresh white sand, which gave a festive appearance even to the meanest little street, and was very pleasing to the eye. Everything seemed bright and neat: the windows even of the smallest houses, cleaned and washed on the preceding day, glistened in the sunbeams; the pavement was swept and whitened, and all traces of disorder and neglect had been diligently removed.

The small house in which Jack Bridewell and his mother lived constituted no exception to the general rule; and if it was not as large and stately as the mansions of the wealthy manufacturers, yet it was, both within and without, quite as clean and white. The little

windows shone like mirrors, the old door was carefully washed, so that it looked almost as if it were new; the space in front was swept and strewed with sand. The same regard for order and cleanliness, which was so conspicuous in the exterior, was observable also in the passage, sitting-room, and kitchen. The humble furniture revealed no spot of dirt, the boards shone with faultless freshness; on the little windows hung snow-white curtains; every utensil, brightly polished and scoured, was found in its proper place.

The inhabitants of the little hut resembled it, as well in its poverty as in its neatness. Their dress was like the furniture, humble, but scrupulously clean. The sharpest eye would not have been able to detect the smallest speck of dirt on the coarse cloth jacket of Jack—who sat at the window with a black-bound book, and cosily looked out into the bright sunshine—or on his shirt-collar, which, I own, was not of the finest linen, or on his drilling trousers of the coarsest texture; and his shoes, although thick-soled and studded with small nails, were so brightly

polished, that one could mirror one's self in them.

Opposite him, at a small table, over which hung a looking-glass a span long and a few inches broad, sat his mother, who was just completing her attire by sticking a few pins into the white ribbons of her simple head-dress. In a few minutes this was done, and with a kind look she turned round to her son.

"I am ready, Jack. Shall we go?" said she.
"Certainly," answered the boy, quickly
jumping up. "The bells have for some time
been calling us to church."

Quickly and adroitly he assisted his mother in putting on her shawl, and then both stepped out into the street, to repair to the house of God, as they did regularly on every Sunday and festival day when not prevented by sickness or any other urgent circumstance. The mother thought that if any one elevated his thoughts towards God with sincere devotion on the Sunday, it was a protection against evil-doing for the whole of the following week.

Jack, with his prayer-book in his hand, walked modestly by the side of his mother, looking down in silence, as if he wished to recollect himself for the coming service. He looked neither to the left nor to the right, till he was unexpectedly addressed by a clear voice.

"Ho, Jack, my lad!" it called to him.
"Where are you going? Surely not to church
to hear a tedious sermon? Come along with
me trout-catching! I have seen a splendid
large fellow yonder in the stream in the wood,
under the roots of an old oak, and to-day I
am pretty sure to surprise him, as the weather
is so favourable. Come with me, my lad!
You surely won't shut yourself up in church
on such a splendid morning as this?"

Jack threw an angry glance on the speaker.

"John Collins," he replied to him in a serious tone, "know you not the command, 'Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath-day?' You would do better to come with me, and refresh your spirit with God's word, than to be idly gadding about in the woods. I

know not what good you can learn in troutcatching."

"I am not talking about learning," answered John, laughing; "only about pleasure. Leave parson and church alone; come, go with me."

"No," replied Jack plainly and decidedly, and hung on to the arm of his mother. "My first feelings on the Sunday are due to God; and I should be afraid that I was sinning if I indulged in frivolous dissipations."

Without looking round any more at John, he quickened his steps and walked away from him. A burst of derisive laughter from John resounded behind his back.

Jack did not feel himself annoyed by it; he only shrugged his shoulders, as if he pitied the wilful boy. By the time that he entered the church with his mother, he had quite forgotten him, and all his thoughts and feelings were concentrated around the Lord of the universe.

At the close of divine service he did not act like so many others, who think that by visiting the church they have satisfied their duty, and then seek any sort of dissipation, but returned home with his mother and meditated on the sermon which the priest had delivered.

In his discourse the preacher had spoken of the love of our neighbour and of the aid which we are bound to give to our brethren in distress, and the outbreak of the recent fire had given occasion for his text. But we are bound to render such aid not only to our fellow-Christians who are threatened in their property and goods, he had further observed, but also to him who is threatened spiritually, and is in danger of sustaining damage to his soul; for such a damage is of greater importance than the loss of earthly goods.

Whilst Jack was meditating still further on this subject, he could not help thinking of John, and how his soul was corrupted, and what a really good deed it would be if one could bring him to a knowledge of his faults and to a better course. Jack felt tempted strenuously and affectionately to exhort the strayed one; and the more he revolved the thing in his mind, the more vividly he experienced the desire to put his good resolution in practice. He knew that John was at

the stream in the neighbouring wood. It was scarcely a quarter of an hour's walk thither. Glowing with zeal, he snatched up his cap and hastened off.

"Whither are you going, Jack?" his mother called after him.

"Only for a little walk in the wood," answered Jack. "I shall be back again by noon."

With hurried steps he walked over the fields, and soon entered the cool shade of the wood, which was still bedecked with all its summer foliage. A gentle wind rustled in the tops of the trees, the stream splashed and murmured as Jack walked along its flowery banks, and the birds twittered and fluttered from branch to branch.

Jack stood still from time to time to listen. Now and then he called out loudly John's name in the wood, but no answer resulted; the sound of his voice seemed to die away unheard amidst the slender beeches and the gnarled oaks.

"After all, John has gone home, and I am running about the wood to no purpose," Jack muttered to himself, after he had several times shouted out his call in vain.

However, he advanced a few hundred paces farther; then hesitating, stopped again to listen, and seemed as if he had made up his mind to retrace his steps, when suddenly he heard in the distance a shrill screaming, intermixed with loud, clear laughter.

"That is he! It is John; I know his voice well!" said Jack, almost terrified by these wild sounds in the still solitude. "What can he be doing? Certainly nothing good, it is evident, from this screeching and screaming. However, I must see; perhaps I have come just at the right time to prevent him from doing something or other wrong!"

He sprang forward towards the spot from which the din reached his ears. The nearer he approached, the shriller became John's screeching, and the louder his laughter. Now Jack espied him.

John was standing in a little open space surrounded with bushes, and was striking furiously with a thick hazel-twig at some object, which Jack was yet unable to discern.

On advancing nearer, he saw that it was a poor little hare, which had been caught in a wire snare, and was exposed, quite defenceless, to the cruel caprice of its tormentor. The poor little creature could not escape; its hind-leg stuck fast in the noose, which was so well secured that all the efforts of the captive were unable to break through it. The young hare screamed in despairing anguish, just like a little child, and performed the wildest jumps in order to free itself. Still the noose remained firm, and the poor beast kept jerking itself backwards, striking the purslane-trees, and compulsorily putting itself into a variety of positions, which were of course laughable and comical enough to move a merciless heart to laughter.

John was, to all appearance, intensely delighted with this jumping and chafing of the writhing captive; and if at any time, from sheer exhaustion, or because it plainly saw that all its exertions were of no avail, it wished to squat and rest a little, then John lashed the tortured creature so furiously with the hazeltwig, that its hairs flew about like dust, and he indulged in the wildest laughter if in its despair it writhed more madly and wildly, and its shrill screaming grew more wailing and piercing.

"For shame, John! for shame!" cried Jack to the cruel tormentor. "Is this the manner in which you hallow the Sunday, the day of the Lord? Good Heavens! how can one torture a poor animal which is already devoted to an impending death? This is more than unfeeling—it is abominable cruelty. Cease, John; you shall not do it any longer."

"And who will hinder me from doing it?" answered John, swinging, with derisive laughter, his hazel-twig for a new stroke.

"I will, if you do not desist," replied Jack, with great determination.

"You! How ridiculous! A stupid young fellow like you order me!" contemptuously exclaimed John. "Pack off, or I'll let you taste the switch, as I did the hare."

At the same moment the hazel-stick whistled again through the air, and sounded on the back of the distressed animal, which repeated its frantic leaps, screaming more lamentably than before.

Jack felt deeply irritated by this cruelty. His purpose to bring John to a knowledge of himself by gentle words and rational representations was entirely forgotten. Anger swelled his breast and veins, and he was on the point of rushing headlong on John and snatching the switch from his hands, when suddenly the bushes rustled behind John, and the figure of an old bearded gamekeeper encountered them.

John in his alarm dropped his switch, Jack stood still with surprise, and both gazed on the keeper with as much astonishment as if he had fallen from the clouds.

The gamekeeper did not concern himself at first with the two boys; he seized the hare by its long ears, and with one powerful blow put an end to the agony of the poor beast. Then turning towards John, he clutched him by his coat-collar with a vigorous grasp, and shook him so roughly as almost to deprive him of his hearing and sight.

"Ho! ho! little lad," said he, in a menacing,

angry tone. "Who gave you permission to maltreat the beasts of the forest? It would serve you right if I were to unsheathe my hanger, and belabour your back with the flat blade of it, till it was marked with all the hues of the rainbow. You heartless, good-for-nothing fellow! What had the poor beast done to you, for you to torment it in this manner?"

John had in the meantime become more composed, and when he saw that the blade of the dreaded *couteau-de-chasse* was not drawn from its sheath, he once more assumed a defiant air.

"Let go of me, sir!" said he imperiously.

"My father is rich enough to be able to pay for dozens of wretched hares. If there is a fine for enjoying one's self a little in the wood, well, the fine shall be paid. But now let go of me, sir, or it may be the worse for you if I tell my father how brutally you have behaved towards me."

The sturdy woodman, half angry, half amused at the boy's impudence, burst into loud laughter, which reverberated through the wood.

"Pert lad," he then said, shaking John anew, "know you not that I could take you off and shut you up in a place where neither sun nor moon would shine upon you? You have been guilty of poaching, my little lad, which makes you liable to a heavy penalty. Say not another word, or you shall learn that from experience, even if your father were Lord Mayor of London!"

John was intimidated. He saw plainly that the gamekeeper was not to be trifled with, and he knew, moreover, that the man would be fully justified in carrying him off and putting him in prison. He became, therefore, more submissive, and had recourse to entreaty.

"Well, sir, don't act so sternly with me," said he, in a much humbler tone than before. "I was not aware that I was guilty of poaching. It was so very amusing to watch the ridiculous jumps of the hare; and, after all, I did not strike it so extremely hard. Here, sir, accept a couple of shillings, and let me go!"

"I don't want your money, my lad," an-

swered the keeper, pushing away John's hand. "You rich people fancy that you can accomplish everything, and make amends for everything, with money! But I should like to know what you will give to God in heaven, when you are summoned before His judgmentseat? You cannot take your money-bags with you into eternity, and they would, too, be of little use to you there. Think of that, lad, when you feel inclined to play any more stupid tricks, and I have an idea it might prevent you from much evil-doing. This time, as I have never before caught you, I will let you off with an admonition. But if I detect you again in the paths of unrighteousness, you will make my acquaintance in a very different way. March! pack off home! and spend your future Sunday mornings better than you have done to-day."

He released John's collar from his powerful fingers, and commandingly motioned to him with his hand to be off.

John sneaked off quite humbled and cowed, and Jack was on the point of following him, when he was detained by the keeper.

"Stay a little while longer, my boy," he said good-naturedly to him. "I overheard you just now, when you were dissuading the lad from torturing the poor animal, and it gave me great pleasure. I know you well, Jack Bridewell; your father was a good friend to me, and I am rejoiced to find that his son has not degenerated. Here, take the hare, and carry it to your mother. Give her the kind wishes of old Bob Bowring, and tell her that he hopes she will relish the roast, and that it will do her good. And as for yourself, my young fellow, if there should occur anything in which I can be of use to you, you may depend upon me. God bless you! Forget not what I have said to you."

He gave Jack a friendly shake of the hand, nodded to him benevolently, and then speedily vanished in the thicket hard by.

"Thank you, keeper," cried Jack to him as he went away, and then picked up the hare which had been given him, and hastened after John, who he knew could not be far off.

In a few minutes he overtook him, and found him bitterly exasperated against the gamekeeper.

"The old scoundrel shall pay dearly for having laid hands on me," said he, full of rage. "I know well that he is in the service of the baronet, Sir Robert Welcome. My father is acquainted with the old gentleman, and shall take good care that the rascal shall lose his place."

"But you do him wrong, John," said Jack, trying to propitiate him. "He did nothing but his duty in preventing you from torturing the poor hare, and, besides, showed you great consideration in not punishing you. He was fully authorised to do so, John."

"And yet he is an impudent fellow," replied John, still irritated. "What need had he to seize me by the collar and bother me with good advice? He might have taken the shillings that I offered him, and the affair would have been settled."

"But he would have transgressed his duty, if he had accepted your bribe, John," answered Jack. "No, no; the very thing for

which I was pleased with him was, that he did not accept your money. Do be reasonable, John. You are the only one that has done wrong, and yet you wish to find fault with another who has not only done his duty, but has also shown himself kind and considerate towards you. Oh, John! if you had been today at church, instead of being here in the wood! The clergyman preached such a beautiful sermon; I am sure it would have edified you."

John smiled scornfully.

"Silly chattering!" said he. "It is much nicer to be out in the open air than within the musty walls of a church. I shall not go to church, unless I am obliged; and I should like to know who will compel me to do so."

"You yourself should, John, if no one else does," replied Jack with vivacity. "It is bad enough to do what is good and proper only from self-compulsion; but, after all, it is better than not to do it at all. At last it becomes a habit, and one acquires by degrees the conviction that acting rightly is the best

thing that a reasonable being can possibly do."

"You speak like a book, Jack," replied John derisively. "Really, you must have been exceedingly attentive at church."

"Yes, that I was," answered Jack frankly. "But what I just said I did not learn for the first time to-day in church, but long ago from my own experience. You may, therefore, believe me that, under all circumstances, it is not only better, but also wiser to be good and zealous in the discharge of one's duties, than to be bad and neglectful in the performance of them."

"What matters good or bad?" responded John. "The chief thing is to procure plenty of amusement; that is my maxim, and I think that that is the most pleasant way to pass through life. For the poor, work; for the rich, enjoyment! That is the order of things in the world."

"And if you should at any time become poor, John?" said Jack impressively. "Unaccustomed as you are to work and useful exertion, without knowledge or skill of any kind, what would become of you? Would you not feel immensely unhappy, and even perish in misery and despair? or, what would be still worse, lapse into crime and sin? Therefore reflect betimes, John. Man never knows what the next day may bring, and for that reason he should be prepared for every misfortune."

John laughed aloud.

"I really believe," exclaimed he, "you wish to force a sermon on me, as to-day is Sunday. You ought to be a parson, Jack! You would make a capital one, I fancy. But, with all that, what you are saying is nothing but silly, idle talk; and if you had a rich father, as I have, you would certainly hold very different language. No; give yourself no further trouble about me, my good lad. I don't see that, with all your fine phrases, and toiling early and late, you at all improve your position, or that you gain the slightest advantage by sacrificing yourself for other people. What did you get by fatiguing yourself lately at the fire, and bathing yourself in perspiration? Just as much and no more than I, who stood quite still, quietly gazing at it. Not a creature even thanked you for your trouble. And so it always is. So let me go my way, and you go yours. Everything else that you might say would be spoken to the wind. Good-bye, then, my dear Jack. Fare you well!"

"I wish you the same, John," answered Jack, deeply vexed that his well-intended representations had made so little impression on John, and he could not refrain from adding: "And may you come to a knowledge of your state before it is too late."

John snapped his fingers in the air, as if he meant to say, "A parcel of nonsense;" and took the path to his father's house.

Jack, somewhat dejected, went back to his mother's cottage. He was considerably surprised when, on entering the little room, he found a visitor.

"Mr. Westmore!" said he, highly astonished.

"Yes, my boy, myself," replied the wealthy manufacturer in a kind tone. "It is time that I sought you out, to thank you for the assistance that you rendered me at the outbreak of the fire. I should have called earlier, my dear Jack, but there was so much to be done that I was obliged first to attend to what was absolutely necessary. But here I am now, and let me know how I can prove to you my gratitude."

Jack blushed deeply from joy and confusion, and, totally unable to make any reply to the kind address of Mr. Westmore, looked, as if imploring help, towards his mother.

"Well, Jack," said she, "Mr. Westmore has expressed very kind and generous intentions towards you. He is willing to take you into his business, and to train you to be a clever merchant, if you feel inclined to accede to his proposal."

"Yes; so the matter stands, my dear Jack," said Mr. Westmore, in confirmation of what she said. "I have made diligent inquiries about you, and have heard nothing but what is good concerning you. Your schoolmaster also is very well satisfied with you, and gives me the assurance that you have acquired all the knowledge that is necessary. The posi-

tion of a merchant is an estimable one, and many a man has made his fortune in it by being cautious, upright, and industrious. So if you do not feel any aversion to the business, come to me. Your mother has already given her consent, and it depends only on you to enter on the career opened to you."

"Oh! I am willing to do everything that you and my mother wish," answered Jack unhesitatingly.

"Well, then, the affair is settled, and you come to me to-morrow," said Mr. Westmore. "I will provide for all your wants, and your mother, too, shall be supplied with all that she requires. So good-bye; early to-morrow you enter my office."

Mr. Westmore then took his departure, leaving Jack in an ecstasy of joy. He could scarcely grasp the idea that so honourable a career, to which he had never ventured to raise his thoughts, was now open before him.

"Oh, John! how wrong you were," he exclaimed, after he had somewhat recomposed himself. "What a rich reward God gives me for a little trouble, which in reality was nothing

more than the simplest act of duty. Mother, it makes me quite happy to think that you will now be relieved from all care and anxiety about me."

"Be grateful for it also to Mr. Westmore," said the excellent woman, pressing the boy in her arms.

"Certainly, mother," answered Jack, with manly decision. "Certainly; you shall never hear a complaint about me, and I will be a faithful, industrious, righteous servant to Mr. Westmore, with God's help."

On the next day Jack entered the business of his fatherly patron, and John opened his eyes widely when, a few days after, he came to the office with a commission from his father, and saw Jack, very neatly dressed, busy at a desk. At the first moment he did not at all recognise him, and it was only when Jack gave him a friendly nod that he became convinced that it was really he.

"You here? As an apprentice? I am surprised!" said he, in a tone of astonishment. "What wind has blown you here?"

"It was a good wind," answered Jack,

smiling. "Mr. Westmore himself fetched me, John, and placed me here in his office. You see now that one does not always do his duty for nothing at all. Had it not been for the fire, I should still have been sitting in my mother's hut, and should have aspired to nothing higher than to be a factory boy. Now I am much better off. So you will at last be convinced that it is good, under all circumstances, to do what is right. Do you see that, John?"

"Well, you have been lucky for once," replied John frivolously and somewhat haughtily. "But what does that concern me? What is suitable for you is not suitable also for me; our ways of living do not run in the same direction."

"So I, too, shall hope and wish," said Mr. Westmore, who had casually overheard the brief dialogue of the two young people, and who now, with a doubtful shake of his head, looked back at John, as the latter was going away. "I am very much afraid that he will not get on very well in the world, for arrogance and idleness contend in him for the

precedency. You won't take him for your model, Jack?"

"Oh no, sir!" answered he. "I should only be glad to make him better, and lead him on the right way."

"That will be a difficult task, for his faults are too deeply rooted in his evil habits," answered Mr. Westmore. "'What is bred in the bone it is hard to get out of the flesh,' is a proverb which in most cases is verified, and will again be verified, as long as the world endures. John may think himself fortunate that his father is a rich man, otherwise it would go badly with him. As for you, Jack, persevere in the habits that you have formed; they are of the right sort, and will pave your way to a contented and happy future. I have with pleasure remarked that you are not only industrious, but also thoughtful and circumspect. These are qualities that you must retain."

"Oh! I will certainly do all that I can," answered Jack, glowing with joy.

"Then you will always have a kind friend in me," said Mr. Westmore, and nodded goodnaturedly to Jack, as the latter went off and returned to his desk.

Jack secretly vowed to himself that he would, at any price, win the friendship and esteem of his benefactor.

## CHAPTER III.

## CHANGING FATES.

N still, noiseless, but unremitted activity, several years passed over the head of Jack, who succeeded more and more in gaining the favour and unlimited confidence of his master. Notwithstanding that he was so young, he already held an important post in the office of Mr. Westmore. and affairs and commissions of no inconsiderable importance were confided to him by his principal. This, however, did not render Jack at all assuming, conceited, or arrogant, but rather spurred him on to manifest, by the most active zeal and the most faithful endeavours, his deep and sincere feelings of gratitude towards Mr. Westmore.

John took a quite opposite course. He

had, a short time after Jack had been received at Mr. Westmore's, entered as an apprentice into the business of his father—really against the wish of the latter, as Mr. Collins thought, very justly, that his son would be trained and kept to business habits much more strictly under the guidance and superintendence of strangers, than he would be in the house of his father. But John, upheld by his mother, who unfortunately idolised her only son, had frustrated the better intentions of his father, and had remained at home, where he was able to behave just as he pleased.

In fact, strict discipline and surveillance were scarcely mentioned or thought of. Mr. Collins, fully occupied with the higher and more important direction of his extensive speculations, was unable to devote any especial attention to the youngest apprentice, and his book-keepers and servants were very careful not to interfere with the son of their master, and not to urge him to industry and exertion.

Hence it happened that John did only just as much as it pleased him. Frequently he did not make his appearance in the counting-house; and if he did come, he idled about, and the idea of effective, serious work did not even enter his head. Besides, were there not there the servants of the house, who received from his father wages and bread? Why should he, the son of the wealthy Mr. Collins, move his hands or bother his brains?

John associated most with the cash-keeper. With him he had constantly little affairs to settle; that is, he managed to have money paid out by the cashier, and filled his pockets with it, in order afterwards to spend it frivolously, and to squander it with dissolute companions. It is true that the cash-keeper once refused the young spendthrift the sums which he demanded, and threatened to report him to his father. John only laughed at it, and threatened to tell his mother.

On the very same day the mother had the cashier summoned to her, and directed him to satisfy, without refusal, all the demands of John, and to set down to her name the sums handed over to him, in order that the father might learn nothing of the extravagance of

her darling son. The cash-keeper, nolens volens, was obliged to obey, or incur the risk of forfeiting his lucrative post. He paid out to John whatever the latter asked, and contented himself with occasionally making rational remonstrances to him, which of course might have been just as well addressed to the wind, and were simply laughed at by John. Why should he be niggardly and save? His father was certainly rich enough, and was earning money without end. It ought surely again to find its way amongst the people.

And for that John took good care.

Of business he understood but little; he had no knowledge of merchandise; the interior arrangement of his father's machinery was to him a completely unknown world, with which he did not evince the slightest desire to become acquainted—book-keeping and the other stupid work in the counting-house did not trouble him. On the other hand, he acquired knowledge which he seemed to prize much more highly than the vulgar capabilities of a merchant's clerk. He always knew where the best cigars were to be bought, and the finest

wines to be procured. He was remarkably well acquainted with all the places of pleasure and dissipation in the town and its neighbourhood, and was able to call every waiter by his Christian name.

The lenders of horses, too, were very well known to him, and the good or bad qualities of their animals were no secret to him. was able to hold learned conversations with the shrewdest stable-master about blood or half-blood horses, and his seat in the saddle was almost as firm as that of a jockey, whose sole business is riding. John had also, by diligent investigation, discovered the best fishing-places in the neighbourhood, and seldom met with any one that surpassed him in expertness in catching fish. The best and largest trout that found their way to the table of Mr. Collins had always been handed into the kitchen by John. In truth, he thought no trouble too great when his object was to ensnare, with craft and patience, a really splendid fish; and many a livelong day he spent for that purpose in the open air, without shrinking either from heat or cold.

Even in forest and hunting science John had greatly improved, and now reduced it to practice on a far larger scale than before, when he had contented himself with torturing poor captive leverets, and making them execute ridiculous jumps. Two or three times the old gamekeeper, Bowring, had caught him, as he was standing proudly over a stag or a roe, which he had killed in the park of Sir Robert Welcome, and on each occasion Mr. Collins had to pay a heavy fine for the poaching of his worthy son. But the indefatigable sportsman, John, made no account of the penalty, for his father was too rich to miss a few hundred pounds; and what were these in comparison with the pleasure of rambling through the park with a double-barrelled gun, and occasionally felling a fine fat stag. John only went more cautiously to work, after he had been caught a few times, and still many a head of game, which at all events had not been purchased in the market, found its way into the kitchen of Mr. Collins. In fact, the valiant John was not so easily daunted, and secretly laughed at the old keeper as often as

he succeeded in imposing upon the cunning chap (as he called him) with a lie.

Hunting, fishing, riding, carousing with jovial companions in the tavern, squandering money with the greatest profusion, occasionally cudgelling the watchmen, smashing windows, snapping bell-wires, and other similar amusements, were the occupations of John, in which he certainly learnt much, but very seldom anything good or useful. That did not in the least concern him. Why should it? father was so rich; as long as he lived and continued to earn money, it could never fail his son. And if the old gentleman died, he, John, was heir to his large property, and then his merry life could be carried on twice as jovially.

So John did not distress his head with troublesome thoughts, and still less his hands with troublesome work. If at any time his father chid or admonished him, he listened to him quietly and patiently, and had the very next moment forgotten the scolding that he had received. He lived on in idleness and extravagance, till once, quite unex-

pectedly, something occurred to disturb him, causing him a very unpleasant surprise, as he had never contemplated the possibility of it.

One day, on his return home from a foxhunt, which he had enjoyed with several jovial companions, he found his mother in tears, his father very serious and pale, and the servants in evident consternation and bewilderment.

"What is the matter, mother?" asked John, astonished at these unusual manifestations. "Has any misfortune occurred?"

"Ask your father, John," answered his mother, sobbing and wringing her hands. "Ah! unhappy woman that I am! Have I lived to see this?"

"Well, father?" said John, turning to Mr. Collins, who was standing, gloomy and pensive, at the fireplace, and gazing with sullen looks at the flickering flames of the burning brands. "What has then happened to make mother look so awfully sad and despairing?"

"If you, instead of idly loitering about like

a sluggard, had concerned yourself about the business, boy, you would not have been compelled to put such a question," growled his father by way of answer. "Several London houses, on which I had great demands, have failed and stopped payment. I lose enormous sums, and am yet uncertain if I shall be able to hold up against the blow. At all events, I am a half-ruined man, and I believe that no other expedient is left for me than to sell off all that I possess, and with a modest income, which may perhaps be saved from the wrecks of my fortune, to retire into quiet seclusion. Anyhow, John, it is all over with your idle life. Your have been lazy long enough, and the time has come when you must work and bestir yourself, in order to earn your daily bread."

"It is not possible! You take too gloomy a view of the matter, father," exclaimed John, quite pale and terrified. "You only wish to frighten us. All your capital is not lost by the failure of the London houses. Impossible! impossible!"

"At any rate, you have done your best to

lighten my cash-box, and for some years, too," continued the old gentleman, still more sternly and sullenly. "It was not till now, when our house is tottering to its very foundations, that the cashier informed me of all. You have, in truth, been leading a merry life, and squandering pretty nearly a fortune, on which a small family might have lived very respectably. Your mother has helped you in all this, and you must now, both of you, bear the consequences. As you have brewed, so you must drink."

The too weak mother wailed again. John shrugged his shoulders.

"For all that, matters cannot be so bad," said he, with more composure than before. "Quiet yourself, mother. Little as I understand of business, I know for certain that father has made considerable consignments of goods to Germany and Spain, and not to London alone. Consequently all cannot be lost. Father only wishes to alarm us."

"Eh! just see the wisdom of the pert youngster, who shows more and more how

little the prosperity of the business lay at his heart," said Mr. Collins, with bitterness. " Pray, don't you know that the consignments to Spain and Germany were all made for ready money? What went thither has long since been paid for, and again disbursed. No. no; it is vain to wish to deceive ourselves. We are standing on the brink of the precipice. and I am only ignorant how deep it is, and if it will completely engulf us. We must await the return of my first book-keeper from London. I have sent him thither to ascertain if there may perchance be anything that can be saved from the wreck. The information which he brings back will evidence to us whether we are reduced to complete beggary, or whether we can still exist-of course, in very limited circumstances—on the relics of my property. Meantime, I advise you to familiarise yourselves with the idea that, in any case, nothing very good can be hoped for."

He turned round abruptly and left the room, to repair to his counting-house, and there, perhaps for the tenth time, to investigate every expedient, and to calculate all the means of help that might still be available to him.

His wife and son remained behind in the deepest consternation, striving in vain to recover from the blow, which, like a flash of lightning from a serene sky, had fallen on them with overwhelming violence.

John comforted his mother as well as he was able, still obstinately maintaining that things could not be so bad as his father represented. He himself, however, did not in reality believe this. It occurred to him, like a troublesome dream, that he was now suddenly to be hurled from the abundance of wealth into the destitution of poverty; and a shudder thrilled through his inmost soul, when he reflected that in the end that must really take place.

Should the fears of his father be verified, what was to become of him? Riding, fishing, hunting, idleness and extravagance, were quite out of the question; and he recoiled, as if from a spectre, from the idea that he must now really and truly work, in order to earn his daily bread.

Work! He work! At what could he work, the spoiled sluggard?

Horror-struck, he recollected that he had learned nothing; at all events, nothing of all that which helps other men, provided that they are industrious and good, respectably and honourably through the world. Now he remembered Jack, with all his admonitions and warnings. Great God! was, then, that which the latter had mentioned only as a remote possibility, really to occur? Was his father, poor and helpless, to become a beggar? -his father, the wealthy Collins, who transacted business with widely-separated nations, and annually gained thousands? Impossible! absurd! That could never be! John would sooner believe that the sky would fall upon him.

He laughed, certainly somewhat constrainedly, but still he laughed.

"Do not make yourself uneasy, mother," said he. "Father either takes too gloomy a view of matters, or wishes, by the alarm with which he inspires us, only to punish us for having, behind his back, dipped rather deeply

into his cash-box. Yes, yes; that's it. You shall see; when Cooper, our first book-keeper, returns from London, there will again be nothing but bright sunshine in the house. There is not the least doubt of it, mother! For all that, I have been awfully frightened; and in future I will certainly check myself a little—not squander so much money—and visit the counting-house more assiduously. Yes, yes; that I will do. So keep up your courage, my dear little mother. All will turn out well; and father, after all, has created only a false alarm."

His mother listened eagerly to John's consoling words, and seemed only too readily to give credence to them; for she dried her tears, and her countenance cleared up a little.

But John, although he suggested to himself every possible contingency for his own tranquillity, could not succeed in chasing away a cloud of anxiety that pressed heavily on his mind. In order to disperse it, he took his hat and left the house, with the view of making among some of his acquaintance more accurate inquiries with regard to the failure of the London houses of business. If the intelligence which his father had received was well founded, doubtless many more business men would be involved in the same calamity, and therefore be able to give him sure information.

By chance John met in the street Jack, who was trotting busily along the pavement. Jack would certainly be well informed on the subject. John hailed him.

"Have you heard," he asked, without any preface, "that some important failures have occurred in London?"

"Yes, unfortunately," replied Jack. "Enormous sums of money have been lost there, and I fear that our firm will suffer greatly from the consequences of these failures. Even Mr. Westmore, cautious as he usually is, ran imminent risk of being borne away in the eddy; but fortunately he withdrew his money just at the right time, and if he has sustained any loss, it can be but an exceedingly small one. I hope your father's business has not been affected by the misfortune."

"I do not know," answered John, scarcely able to conceal his anxiety and bewilderment.

"You know perfectly well, Jack, that I do not concern myself much about business. However, I am willing to hope that my father has been not less cautious than Mr. Westmore."

"I entertain not the least doubt of that, for your father passes for a very able man of business," answered Jack. "You should really take him for your pattern more than you do John. But I see plainly that you are growing impatient, so I will not inflict a sermon on you. And, indeed, I have no time for that; my business is pressing. Farewell then, John, and—may God enlighten you."

Speedily he pursued his way, leaving John in no small consternation. It was, then, perfectly true that the London houses had failed, and that large sums were lost by the failures. His father, therefore, might be right.

A gloomy stupefaction came over John, and a heavy oppression weighed on his heart. With deep, secret anxiety, he looked for the return of Mr. Cooper, whom his father had despatched to London to save anything that was yet possible to be saved. Why had his father not sent John? John sighed as he put to himself this question.

## CHAPTER IV.

## DISTRESS TEACHES PRAYER.

NDOUBTEDLY, if Mr. Collins had sent his son to London—if he could have senthim there—if John, through

his indolence and want of knowledge, had not been totally incapable of adjusting his father's entangled affairs, much might have turned out differently and better than it did. Unfortunately, too, Mr. Collins himself could not undertake the journey to London; his presence was indispensably necessary in his business, to prevent everything from being irretrievably complicated, and nobody—least of all John, his son and the future heir to the whole business—was able to supply his place. Besides, he was ill, bowed and stricken down by the unfortunate tidings which had followed each

other in rapid succession; and thus, under the pressure of circumstances, and in his perilous position, he had no other expedient left than to send his first book-keeper, with the requisite instructions and full power to act as he should think proper.

Mr. Cooper was a proved, able, and expert man of business; if he exerted himself, much might, perhaps, yet be done to avert at least the worst extremity—the complete penury of Mr. Collins. The latest despatches from the metropolis were of a more hopeful tenor than the first uncertain information would have led one to apprehend. All had not been swallowed up in the abyss. Mr. Cooper represented that very considerable sums might still be recovered from some of the bankrupt firms, and the gloomy countenance of Mr. Collins somewhat brightened.

This did not escape the eye of John; he imagined that favourable news must have arrived, and although he had not on other occasions greatly concerned himself about business, he now slipped into the counting-house to peruse the letters which had arrived. Mr. Cooper's

letters intoxicated him with joy, and all his cares and apprehensions were at once forgotten. John was once more sailing with a favourable wind, and the inclination for his accustomed dissipations awoke with renewed vigour. The better resolves which he had adopted under the pressure of necessity were again cast to the winds, and he dreamed of nothing but an unbroken chain of hilarity and amusements.

His dream, however, was but short, and bitter was to be his awakening from it.

The letters which Mr. Cooper had orders to despatch, unexpectedly ceased to arrive. Two, three posts came in without any communication from him. Mr. Collins grew at last seriously anxious. What motive could his book-keeper have for suddenly breaking off his correspondence? An alarming suspicion, which he had a difficulty in suppressing, dawned in Mr. Collins' mind. But when the fourth post brought no letter, he could no longer remain in the house. Away he must to London, to see his plenipotentiary.

A fresh, heavy misfortune awaited him; he

learned that Mr. Cooper had, in the most shameful manner, abused his confidence; that he had embezzled the sums of money paid in, and had absconded. Whither he had fled, no one could tell, and the knavish deceiver had so well concerted his measures, that all searches—even the most active ones of the police—were without result. The villain had vanished without leaving any traces behind him, and Mr. Collins might now regard himself as a completely ruined man—in fact, as a beggar.

This last blow fully bowed him down. With a broken heart he returned home, and a week after, he was borne to his grave. He had not been able to survive the downfall of his prosperity.

Of a truth, everything was lost. The payments of the house of Collins, which had once stood in such high repute, had to be stopped; everything was placed under seal by legal proceedings; clerks and operatives, and the whole collection of servants, had to be dismissed; and in the public papers was to be seen an advertisement, notifying that on a stated day

would take place an important sale, at which all the real and personal property of the deceased Mr. Collins would be sold by public auction for ready cash.

All this misfortune might have been avoided if the proprietor's son had been able to attend to affairs in London, instead of an unfaithful and unscrupulous servant. John felt and knew this well, and the bitterest regret for having hitherto so worthlessly wasted his life filled his soul with despair. But this repentance, however sincere it might be, came too late, and could not prevent the crash. He and his mother must quit the splendid house in which they had resided, and might be even satisfied with finding a garret, which an old packer, who had spent many years in Mr. Collins' service, had gratuitously ceded to them out of compassion and gratitude.

The day fixed for the auction arrived, and every iota of what the wealthy Mr. Collins had once called his property was sold. The manufactory, the dwelling-house, the costly furniture, the splendid pictures, the lofty mirrors, the equipages, the horses—all came under



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the hammer of the auctioneer, and passed into the hands of strangers.

With what feelings John was present at the sale may easily be conceived. They were the bitterest that he had yet experienced, and he was scarcely able to restrain his tears. His mother wept the whole day, ready to break her heart, and looked so wretched and cast down, that one had reason to fear that she also would speedily succumb to grief, trouble, and anxiety for the future.

No resource was left to the poor but once so rich lady. The proceeds of the auction were shared amongst Mr. Collins' creditors, and his family did not receive a single shilling of the sum. Mrs. Collins was a beggar, and dependent on the charity of strangers. No consolation illumined the darkness of her great and heavy misfortune, and the sight of John, so far from alleviating the violence of her grief, served to redouble it. What was to become of him, who was so spoiled and accustomed to nought but idleness and gadding about, who had learnt nothing useful, and, moreover, did not enjoy the best of reputations? If poor

Mrs. Collins thought of the future, her heart must indeed be overwhelmed with poignant anguish, and no friendly star brightened the darkness of her soul.

And John?

Well, certainly, he must now be fully aware that he must do something or other, if he and his mother were not to perish with hunger. But what could he do? All that he had learnt was totally useless towards procuring his bread. To spend and squander money on trifles of every kind he well understood; but how to earn money he was quite ignorant. He now wandered about with heavy heart and aching brain, anxiously pondering over his future prospects. Painful repentance and gnawing anguish tortured his soul, and he thought a hundred times of the admonitions which Jack had formerly addressed to him, and which he had so basely derided and cast to the winds. Oh! why had he not followed his counsels, whilst yet there was time? The whole misfortune might then have been avoided, or at least the worst part of it.

However, as the past was irrevocable, the

future must be thought of, and some means devised to procure him and his mother bread. The little that his mother and he himself had saved from the wreck—some trinkets, watches, rings, and similar articles—were obliged to be sold one after the other, in order to satisfy their most urgent wants; and the hour came, at which John carried to the pawnbroker's the last remnant of their former abundance, in order to receive for it a few shillings. When these also were expended—and they could not last long—what then? His choice then lay between work and starvation.

In deep despair, John slunk through the streets, and crept humbly under the shadow of the houses, in order to escape observation as much as possible, when suddenly Jack stood before him, and accosted him in a friendly manner.

"Poor John," said he, "I have deeply and sincerely lamented and regretted the heavy misfortune that has so suddenly burst upon your family, and long ere this I should have called on you, had I known where you were residing. How are you, my unfortunate friend?"

"Wretched—driven to such a pitch of desperation that it cannot be worse," answered John, deeply moved by the affectionate and sympathising words of the honest Jack, whom he had formerly so often derided and looked down on with contempt. Tears rolled down his meagre, pallid cheeks, and he wrung his hands. "Oh, Jack!" he cried, groaning from the depth of his heart; "why did I not follow your counsels!"

"It is not yet too late to do so, John," replied Jack, in an encouraging tone. "If you only show a good will, John, and choose to forget your past life, and work faithfully, you will have no difficulty in finding a good, or at least a tolerable post. In fact, I know of one place for you. At Mr. Robertson's, the wealthy manufacturer of beautiful hardware, a situation is vacant; I own, only a subordinate one, but still one which will support the person who fills it. If you are willing to accept it, I think I can venture to promise you that you will obtain it at my recommendation."

"What sort of a place is it, Jack?" asked John.

"Only a packer's place," answered Jack, with some embarrassment as he well knew how deeply John's pride would have to be humiliated in so inferior a position. "You know very well what his business is: he has to pack the knives and other goods by dozens neatly in paper, and to tie them with packthread, to make them convenient for sending off. It is rather tedious, John; but it is soon learned, and does not require any great amount of exertion. Well, what do you think of it?"

John fixed his eyes on the ground, and his face was red with shame and wounded pride. He was to be a packer, and to accept a position in which there was naught but low, servile drudgery—he who had reined the most fiery steeds and had ridden in the most jocund fox-hunts! How high did Jack then tower over him—that Jack once so poor, but who had now so ably raised himself by his industry and perseverance.

But what was John to do? Hunger is hard to bear. He must now make up his mind to accept the first situation that offers, if the salary attached to it will only furnish him with daily bread.

"Well, John, what do you mean to do?" resumed Jack, after a somewhat long and painful pause. "Am I to speak to Mr. Robertson? I advise you, as a friend, to accede to my proposal; for, as it is your first situation, it would be difficult to find anything better."

"But that is nothing else than being a daylabourer!" muttered John at last, with considerable perplexity. "Oh God! that I should be obliged to undergo such a disgrace!"

"John, to work like an honest man is no disgrace," answered Jack, in a very serious tone. "No one, or, at least, no sensible man, will despise you for striving to earn your bread honestly. You are reputed—whether justly or unjustly I cannot and will not decide—not to have learned much, and therefore it seems to me quite impossible, I must candidly own, to get you a place in a counting-house. You must begin from the lowest step, John; you must fully exert yourself, be

very industrious and accurate, and at the same time acquire as much knowledge as you possibly can. Then people will very soon reward you with their esteem and confidence, and, perhaps earlier than you think, assign you a better post. But you must make a beginning, and, before anything can be done, show that you are industrious and effectively useful. That is not at all difficult, John, if you have but a good will towards it. I am sure you are much wiser and cleverer than I am; you cannot fail to rise, if you will exert yourself a little. On my part I will gladly second you to the best of my ability, and teach you all that I have till now learned at Mr. Westmore's. I have many a spare hour in the evening, when we could meet, and I would willingly sometimes devote an hour to you on Sunday afternoons."

John was still combating within himself. He could not make up his mind to humble his pride so deeply as to become a vile mechanic, and would fain hope that some miracle or other might occur to transplant him into a better position than that which now offered.

"I will wait," said he at last. "The matter is not so pressing, and I must first talk about it with my mother. I cannot decide so quickly."

"Well, as you please, John," responded his well-meaning friend. "Only let me remind you of the fable of the crane, which wished to diet itself only on fat carp, and despised all meaner food, till at last it was compelled to content itself with a few wretched frogs. Think of that, John."

"I will do so; I will see you again," answered John. "Only give me a little time."

"A few days, certainly," replied Jack. "But do not defer the matter too long, otherwise Mr. Robertson might grow impatient, and fill up the place with some one else. Reflect; it will give you bread, and work is no disgrace."

With these words, the two young people shook each other by the hand and wended their way. John felt himself mortified and humiliated to an extraordinary degree; and it aroused in him a painful feeling to be obliged, in a certain measure, to accept a

favour from the hands of Jack. At the same time, his pride revolted at the idea of his entering into the degrading position of a workman; and in the worst of moods he returned to his mother.

She, too, when he related to her his conversation with Jack, shuddered at the prospect of seeing her darling son in the garb of a common workman, and would not hear a word about it.

"No, John," said she; "matters will not be so bad as that. Your late father had numerous friends, whom he enabled to gain considerable sums of money. Seek them out; some one or other of them will consider it a pleasure to allot you an honourable post in his business. Nothing further is required for that than an application."

The proposition of his mother was more pleasing to John than the offer of Jack, and he at once adopted it with the greatest eagerness. Little as he had concerned himself about the business during the lifetime of his father, he yet remembered some of the principal persons with whom the latter had had

commercial transactions, and resolved to call on them without delay, and to acquaint them with his wishes. That very day he entered on his rounds, and was everywhere received with great coldness, and found that no one lent an ear to him. One abruptly refused him; another pretended that all the places in his house were filled; a third gave him pretty plainly to understand that he did not wish to have anything to do with loungers and sluggards; a fourth even told him in plain terms, that in reality he was the sole cause of the failure of his father, who would never have been ruined, if he had had in his son a prop on which he could rely; and, to cut the story short, nobody would own John, much less hold out to him the helping hand of a friend.

Full of shame and rage, he returned to his mother, indulging in the most virulent invectives against the base, mercenary souls that showed themselves so ungrateful towards the son of their old business friend.

The next day he renewed his attempts, but with the same unfavourable result, and now

felt himself completely humiliated and his pride fairly broken. The few shillings which he had lately brought home melted away alarmingly quick, and he was quite at a loss to know how he should procure any more money, as there was now nothing which he could either sell or pawn. He again reflected—and this time with somewhat less disdain than before—on the proposal of the faithful Jack, and his mother also was not now so decidedly opposed to it.

When the last shilling but one had to be changed in order to purchase bread and a little cordial for his mother, and when hitherto no miracle had occurred to help John to a more acceptable situation, he said, with a deep sigh:

"It is useless to struggle any longer against it, mother; I must seek out Jack, or to-morrow evening we must go to bed hungry!"

His mother sighed even more deeply than he, and her tears flowed. But it was indeed true; they must go hungry to bed, if John did not succeed in raising money. He went then to Jack, and on the following morning he was to be seen standing in Mr. Robertson's shop, and learning in what manner knives and other such articles are neatly wrapped in paper, and conveniently arranged for despatching to foreign correspondents.

This occupation did not particularly please him; however, hunger breaks through stone walls, and if he was to live, he must turn his hands to something. He returned to his mother in the evening, tired, dejected, and peevish; but he brought with him a shilling—the first that, in the whole course of his life, he had earned by his own exertions.

One would have supposed that he must be greatly pleased with it. But no! He experienced only the oppressive feeling of servitude, not the elevating sentiments of the honest workman, who is conscious to himself of having done his duty. He surlily threw down to his mother the shilling that he had earned, cursing his fate which compelled him, from a worthless parasite, to become a useful member of society. So perverse was his disposition, and so deeply rooted were his evil

habits! He despised and hated that which gained him his bread, and preserved him from dying of hunger—work.

Could anything have been more simple?

## CHAPTER V.

## UNEXPECTED FORTUNE.

ACK visited John from time to time, according to his promise, and did all in his power to open his eyes, and

to reconcile him to his, of course, inferior position. But John did not at all lend a more willing ear to his representations than he had done before, but complained and bewailed that he was so deeply degraded. Jack professed himself ready to give him instructions in mercantile affairs, but John peevishly declined the offer.

"Nothing more was wanting," said he.
"When I have plagued myself the whole day
with making up these accursed packages, am
I to sit down besides in the evening and torment myself with the pen? Never!"

"But you will be able by that means to work your way up," said Jack persuasively. "It is not, after all, a matter of such difficulty, John. I myself have done it, and still do it. When the counting-house is closed, I go up to my room, and learn those branches of knowledge in which I am deficient. Spanish I have already made so great progress, that Mr. Westmore has confided to me the correspondence with Spanish America; and for some time I have been studying French and German. A good merchant can never acquire too much information, and a knowledge of foreign languages especially, is on many occasions highly serviceable to him."

"Alas! it is all over with me and my hopes in every possible way," sullenly replied John. "All that I should learn would now be of no use to me."

"It is only your laziness that prompts you to say that," replied Jack in a tone of displeasure. "Really, if you do not get the better of that, you will always move in the lowest sphere. But knowledge is power; it

lends wings, and will speedily enable you to soar. Only the idle man remains below; the industrious one works his way above ground. Therefore, be industrious, John. You can be so if you please; and what you learn will be for your own advantage. That you must see, John."

Beyond a doubt John saw it, for he was anything but a booby; but his laziness showed itself stronger than his better knowledge. If, urged on by Jack, he really made any attempt at improvement, his power for action soon again became paralysed, and the old inclination to do nothing prevented him from proceeding to any effective, sustained exertion.

Jack, greatly as he regretted it, was at last compelled to give him up; for he plainly saw that he was only wasting his own time, without benefiting John in the slightest degree.

"Manage your affairs, then, as you please," he said to him; "but do not afterwards complain, if matters turn out badly with you, for you do not care to have them turn out better. If at a later period you should come to a proper knowledge of things, have recourse again to me. But mind that it be not too late! No repentance can bring back the lost years of youth."

Jack left, and came back no more. John, under the pressure of necessity, performed his work mechanically, but had no idea of any further exertion. He certainly eked out a bare existence, but entertained not the slightest hope of ever improving his position—at any rate, by his own endeavours and exertion.

It was then that fortune was once more to smile on him, just when he least expected it, and when he no longer ventured to hope that some miracle would come to his aid. The boundless long-suffering of God revealed itself in him; it again offered him the means of arousing himself, and of preparing for himself a happy future; and it lay only with him to employ this means rightly, and to show that his sorrow and repentance at the time of his father's downfall had been sincere.

One evening, about a year after his entrance into Mr. Robertson's shop, he returned

home from business, ill-humoured and peevish as usual, and found his mother in the highest pitch of excitement. She laughed and cried by turns, and John experienced some difficulty in eliciting from her anything coherent and intelligible.

"But what in the world is the matter, for you to behave in this strange manner, mother?" said he at last, in a rough, harsh tone. "Do speak rationally, or I will go off again immediately, and not return before night."

"No, stay, my son," begged his mother, collecting herself. "You must hear all directly, and share my joy. Good luck—great good luck—has fallen to our lot!"

"Good luck! good luck to us!" replied John, with a scornful laugh. "I have long since ceased to entertain the idea that good luck could possibly fall into our lap. What will it be? Some trash or other that is not worth mention. But do, at all events, speak, that I may learn what is in question, and what deprives you of breath and self-possession."

"Read! read! a despatch from the Court of Chancery," replied the mother, handing to John an official document with a large seal. "A cousin of your late father has died, and appointed in his will your father sole heir to the property that he left behind him. It is a large sum of money, John. We are saved; and you, poor boy, need no longer live in dependency and servitude."

John opened his eyes widely, and hastily snatched the letter out of his mother's hand. But when he glided over it with cursory glances, he grew red and pale in rapid alternations, his hand trembled, and his breathing stopped. At last he uttered a scream of delight, and threw himself with transport on his mother's neck.

"Saved!" he cried. "You are right, mother; that is really a message from Heaven. Saved! saved! I' no longer need torment myself like a dog, and allow myself to be eyed with suspicious glances, and be reprimanded by strangers. But is it, then, really true? Is it not, perchance, a dream? Oh, the awakening out of it must be frightful!"

Again he seized the letter and read it, this time circumspectly and slowly, weighing each word of it with mistrust and anxiety. But it was correct in every particular—his father's name, with all his Christian names, accurately mentioned, the amount of the inheritance set down plainly in words and figures; an error, an oversight, a deception could not possibly be there. Again John shouted aloud and danced in ecstasy round the room.

"Ah, this noble cousin!" he cried. "God grant him everlasting beatitude, for having made us so happy! Thirty thousand pounds sterling! A pretty property for us, mother. We can do something with that. And possession of it can be had at any hour. That I do call a pleasing surprise. Hurrah for the cousin! But, after all, what and who was he? I have never heard of him; neither you nor father ever spoke of him."

"I, too, know but little of him," answered the mother. "I have only a dim recollection that, shortly after my marriage with your father, a young man once called on us and claimed our hospitality. Your father treated

him with kindness, and introduced him to me as the son of his father's sister. The young man-ah! now I remember-was on the point of setting out for Bombay in the service of the East India Company, but was destitute of funds for the voyage, or something of that sort—I have forgotten what and your father, always kind and generous, made him a present of a considerable sum, or advanced it to him-I do not now very accurately remember the circumstance-and now, I fancy, the cousin must have made his fortune in India, and then, out of gratitude for the support which he received from your father, appointed him his heir. Wonderful how many a time a kind, benevolent acteven many years afterwards, when one has long since forgotten it—bears its fruit! Oh, John! when one thinks of anything of that kind, really one ought to be always good, and to act in a manner pleasing to God."

"Yes, yes, mother," said John, distracted, and without greatly heeding her last words. "The next point must, however, be first kept in view. I shall have no rest till I have come

into actual possession of the inheritance. Tomorrow I shall go to the Court, and you must
accompany me, in order to demand immediate payment of the sum. And then—then
—when we have received it—then—"

"Well, what then, John?" inquired the mother, when her son, pensive and abstracted, ceased to speak.

"Then," continued he with sparkling eyes—"then we will enjoy our good fortune with full draughts, and, after a long absence, renew our acquaintance with the joys of wealth. That will be a pleasure, mother. Now we shall no longer have occasion to be ashamed, when we meet old acquaintances in the street."

"Good, my son, good," said the mother; "but, after all, you must think also of the future. What are you going to do with the money? It must be placed out somewhere or other; you must engage in some business or other. You will not wish to be completely idle?"

"We will talk of that at some future time, mother," replied John hurriedly. "We will see about all that. First of all, I wish thoroughly to enjoy our fortune, and to fling equal contempt on the false friends who despised us in our adversity. The wretches! They would not give me the opportunity of earning even a morsel of bread. Now they shall pay for it!"

"You can do them no harm, John," replied the more discreet mother. "Leave them in peace, and concern yourself no more about them. Strive rather to win an estimable and honourable position in the world, such as that which your late father occupied. That will be acting more wisely."

"No, no; you must not suggest anything to me, mother," answered John in an irritated tone. "There will be time enough to think about that by-and-bye. First of all, we will have a nice establishment, buy handsome furniture, handsome horses, handsome equipages, and ride proudly in our carriage through the street, past the windows of the ragamuffins who would not know us when we were poor. Now they shall open their eyes widely, and be vexed. Yes, that they shall! The hand-

somest carriages and the handsomest horses shall be ours, mother. I will look out for them; I understand all that. And you shall be housed like a queen; only leave all to me. Fie on this wretched garret! You shall not stay in it four and twenty hours longer, mother. To-morrow morning I look out for a house, which we will purchase; and till it is furnished and arranged, you shall live in the first hotel in the town!"

"John! John!" said the mother, quite alarmed at the extravagant plans of her son, whose head really seemed to be a little turned by the fortune which had so unexpectedly devolved on them. "You are acting as if we had more than a hundred thousand pounds at our command. Reflect, and consider maturely the steps that you are going to take. Our cousin's inheritance certainly enables us to enjoy a respectable competency; but with reckless and frivolous profusion, it cannot possibly go very far."

"Ah, mother! these are things that you do not understand," replied John, in an angry and peevish tone. "You must really leave

me to act as I judge proper. We must put our establishment in proper order, and the money that we spend in doing so I shall soon earn again. Yes, yes; do not look at me with such an air of astonishment. I have no intention whatever of leading an idle life. God forbid! Experience has made me wise. I shall engage in some business or other work, exert myself strenuously, and earn money—large sums of money, just as father did. But, first of all, I wish to let the world know that we are no longer the poor spongers that we were yesterday. You ought not to try to persuade me to do anything to the contrary, mother."

The poor woman was weak enough implicitly to believe and confide in her son, and made no further objections. The truth is, that she found it quite natural that John, after so many bitter humiliations, should wish to indulge in a little ostentation and display; and as he gave her the firm assurance that he would afterwards be active and industrious, she thought that it would be only reasonable to grant him a short triumph.

As for John, not only had he in the next moment forgotten all his promises, but also gave full play to his ardent imagination, and built castles of every glittering colour in the He slept but few hours on the next night; and when he did slumber, there danced around him pleasing dreams, displaying to him the future in the brightest hues. Only once a harassing perplexity suddenly took possession of his mind, on his awakening from one of these dreams. Was not, after all, the information which they had received of the inheritance from India only a dream? An ice-cold perspiration damped his brow when this thought suggested itself to him, terror thrilled through his nerves, and his heart almost ceased to beat from anxiety and fear. He could not rest on his humble couch. sprang up, kindled with a trembling hand a light, and sought after the document. breathed again, relieved, when he found it, and once more convinced himself of its contents.

"Thank Heaven, it is all true and authentic!" he muttered to himself, as he wiped the cold

perspiration from his forehead, and pressed his hand on his throbbing heart. "I could not have survived it had it been only a stupid dream."

He extinguished the light, and laid himself down again. But for the sake of security, he took the document with him into his bed, placed it under his pillow, and felt for it from time to time, in order to convince himself of its real existence, and to calm his uneasiness if he should again awake. He longed impatiently for the morning dawn.

At length, after a night which John thought the longest in his life, the glorious sun shone brightly through the small windows of the garret, and John sprang up and dressed as quickly as possible. His mother, too, had awaked, and John scarcely allowed himself time to finish his frugal breakfast. With the last morsel still in his mouth, he seized his cap, in order to hurry off.

His mother was astonished at his great haste.

"It is useless for you to go, John; it is yet much too early," she said "The gentlemen

of the Court will not hold their session at eight o'clock."

"I know that very well, mother," answered John hastily and uneasily; "but I have to make inquiries. I must ascertain at what hour the Court opens, and I must just look in at Brown's, the agent; he is always in possession of the surest news; perhaps he knows even now where there is a house to be sold that may suit us, and—the earlier we get settled, mother, the better."

"Pray, do not do anything over-hastily, John," said the more cautious mother.

"Make yourself easy," cried John, hastening out of the door and down the stairs.

Radiant with joy, he walked through the streets, carrying his head high, whilst before his eyes had timidly sought the ground. To all his acquaintance that he met, he detailed the history of his inheritance, and received with marked condescension the congratulations which poured in from the companions of his former dissipated life. Many who had shunned him, and not even deigned to look at him since his father's death, shook him by the

hand with the greatest cordiality now that he had again become rich, and assured him that he was a good fellow, and that they were his best and most faithful friends, on whom he could at all times count.

John well knew what value was to be attached to these assurances of friendship, for which he was indebted solely and alone to the heritage which had devolved on him; nevertheless, he received them graciously, as these jovial companions were indispensable to him for his future merry life. The past was forgotten, and they promised each other mutually to hold together only the more faithfully for the future.

Jack, too, casually encountered the happy John, and of course heard the good news. Jack rejoiced at it sincerely and heartily.

"Well, that is a great blessing from God," said he with warmth. "Doubtless you will now seek to render yourself worthy of it. What happiness for your mother, who was so little accustomed to the privations of poverty! Keep a tight hand on your wealth, John, and take good care not to let it again slip through

your hands. Economy and industry, let that be your watchword for the future."

"Yes, yes, you silly screech-owl," responded John with a laugh. "There will be time enough to think about that by-and-bye. First of all, we will have a little enjoyment."

Jack shook his head.

"John," said he very seriously, almost sadly, "if those are your sentiments, the splendour will not last long."

"That is my look-out," answered John carelessly, and went on, to escape the tedious sermons of his old acquaintance.

Jack did not obtrude himself any further on him. "I wonder how all this will turn out," he murmured to himself, and turned his back to John.

Considerable time was to elapse ere he saw him again.

John repaired to the agent, and told him that he had called to see him about a house. When Mr. Brown heard of the Indian legacy, he showed himself excessively obliging.

"You have come just at the right time," said he. "Old General Ben died recently, as

you will know, Mr. Collins; and yesterday I received a commission from the heirs to sell his house, with all its appurtenances. It is a charming property—the house most elegantly furnished, beautiful horses in the stable, beautiful equipages, a large garden with greenhouses and hot-houses, and the site quite close to the town. It will be just the thing to suit you, Mr. Collins."

John was very well acquainted with the estate, for he had in former days often climbed over the garden walls, and, without the permission of the proprietor, filled his pockets with the good man's best fruit.

"What do you ask for the thing?" inquired he.

"Ten thousand pounds sterling—the lowest price. A ridiculously small sum for such a property!" answered Mr. Brown. "Make up your mind at once, Mr. Collins. If you do not quickly catch at it, ten other purchasers are in treaty for it, and you will have to search a long time, before you will meet with anything so well adapted to your taste."

John did not take much time to consider;

for he was naturally of an impetuous character, and hasty in his conclusions. He was quite aware that the property yielded no returns, as it consisted only in a house and garden, which could not be kept in order without continual expense; but it suited his purpose to make a show, and to set up for a great man, and this determined him.

"We will look at the thing, Mr. Brown," said he. "If all is in good order, we shall not disagree, I fancy."

The agent professed himself ready to accompany him. John inspected house, yard, stabling, horses, garden, and green-houses, and was greatly delighted with all. He closed the bargain on the nail.

"I will have the thing," said he. "As soon as I come into possession of the Indian heritage, I will pay for it. When shall I be able to move into the house?"

"At any hour—it is at your disposal, Mr. Collins," answered the wily and supple agent. "Only will you have the kindness to allow me to accompany you to the Court?"

"Certainly! You wish to convince yourself

if the story of the legacy is quite correct," answered John, laughing. "You are a cautious, cunning fox! However, you are right. We can go forthwith, for in half an hour the session will be opened. Order a carriage, Mr. Brown; we will then drive to my mother's, fetch her, and immediately repair to the spot."

The agent felt no hesitation in fulfilling this request of John's; and in an elegant, open carriage, drawn by two splendid black horses, both rattled back to the town and through the streets.

This caused quite a sensation. The people gazed with astonishment, whilst John rocked himself proudly on the swelling cushions of the carriage, and greeted condescendingly those of his acquaintance who chanced to meet him. On others, who had shown him their door in his abasement, he flung haughty and contemptuous glances, and arrived quite proud and happy at the little house, in which his mother still occupied the wretched garret. In few words he imparted to her the occurrences of the morning, and summoned her to accompany them to the Court.

The poor woman was, of course, much alarmed at her son's arbitrary and impetuous proceedings, and seemed very much inclined to remonstrate with him about his conduct; but John did not give her opportunity to say much.

"It is useless to chatter, mother," said he, hastily interrupting her. "The business is settled, and cannot be undone. And why should it be? The house suits us; we shall be spared the trouble of putting it in order, and some place of residence or other we must certainly have."

"But so dear a one, John!" said the mother reproachfully.

"And why not?" replied he. "People must see that we are again exalted; and, besides, only let me engage in a business, mother, then the sum that the house costs will soon be reimbursed."

These last words quieted the mother.

"Keep your promise, and I am content with all that you do," said she, following her son to the carriage, in order to drive to the Court and receive the East Indian legacy.

In this no difficulty presented itself. was prepared and en règle, and Mrs. Collins, on giving her acknowledgment, received the round sum of thirty thousand pounds sterling in exchequer bills, a third of which forthwith found their way into the hands of Mr. Brown, the agent, who smirkingly put them into his The remaining formalities relating to the conclusion of the purchase and the payment were complied with, and John now found himself in possession of a beautiful house and a considerable capital in ready cash, which, if he employed it well, might serve as a firm foundation for his own happiness and that of his mother for the whole period of their lives.

Quite radiant with joy, John moved into the house, and on the very same evening a small number of his former companions assembled round him, with whom he tasted the good wines which were found in the wellstocked cellar of the old deceased general. The riotous crew prolonged their revelry till late in the night, and their huzzaing and wild merriment penetrated even into the still apartments which Mrs. Collins had taken possession of in the new abode. The poor woman did not feel herself quite so happy as her darling son, and the uproar of the disorderly wassailers filled her with anxious forebodings.

"This is a good beginning for a new life!" said she to herself with a sigh. "God grant that it may not continue so. At all events, I will have a serious talk with John tomorrow."

More sorrowful and cast down than rejoiced at the improvement in her circumstances, Mrs. Collins at last retired about midnight to rest. But it was long ere she could close her eyes in sleep; and the soft pillows on which her head rested were moistened with her tears.

## And John?

He caroused with his jovial companions till bright morn, and then, senseless from drunkenness, staggered to a sofa, where a leaden, death-like sleep closed his dizzy eyes. His bottle-companions, laughing, let him lie, and went off reeling. All became still in the house; but it was an uncomfortable, desolate stillness.

Any one who could have cast a glance into this house on this morning, and could have seen the pale face of the mother resting on the pillow, wet with tears—any one who could have seen John in his unquiet sleep, and surrounded with broken bottles and glasses in the dirty, disorderly room, would not have believed that fortune had entered under this roof.

And had true, real, genuine fortune come under it? That we shall see.

## CHAPTER VI.

## FAITHFUL ATTACHMENT.

HILST John Collins was quaffing the cup of joy in copious draughts, and hastening without rest from enjoyment to enjoyment, always deferring the time of labour to a more distant day; whilst his mother vainly entreats and urges him to devote himself with persevering assiduity to some useful pursuit; whilst he is driving about in his beautiful equipage, or riding out to the hunt with his former companions, and returning in every particular to the life which he led in his father's lifetime, we shall see how Jack Bridewell is spending his days, and if he has remained faithful to the promise which he once gave to his mother and his master.

The life of a merchant is ordinarily uniform, and proceeds at a quiet, steady pace, which is not often interrupted by exciting occurrences. Rarely does an opportunity of attaining any kind of brilliant distinction present itself in the exercise of his profession to the young man who handles the pen in the countinghouse. Still, noiseless, and unobtrusive is his working; and although he may perhaps maintain relations with the most distant lands; although he may put in circulation and receive immense sums; although his ships are perchance sailing on all the seas, in order to facilitate the barter of countries the most different and the most remote from each other; although, perhaps, the weal or woe of thousands rests in his hands, all takes place and is conducted by almost invisible threads, which spin themselves out from the narrow countingroom far over land and sea.

The negro in the plantations of the West Indies—for whom does he work? Who sets his hands in movement? Who drives him into the hot sugar-mill, or to the wide fields, where, under the tropical sun, he harvests, in

the sweat of his brow, cotton, coffee, sugar, and tobacco?

The copper-brown savage—for whom does he perilously roam through the primitive forest, risking to be torn to pieces by wild beasts or stung to death by venomous serpents, in order to collect the delicious vanilla and other productions of the tropics?

The whalefisher at the icy poles of the earth—for whom does he bid defiance to the grim cold, to the raging storms, and the destroying icebergs, in order to fill his ship with blubber and whalebone?

For whom does the Chinese collect the fragrant tea, and the hunter in the far west the precious fur?

The merchant in his little room sends forth a few sheets of written paper, and lo! in the east, west, north, and south, the tiny, mysterious characters set thousands of hands in movement, and neither negro, savage, nor Chinese is able to say whence the secret spring of his activity has proceeded.

In perfect stillness works the merchant; and however far the power of his will may

reach, the invisible little pen is the sole lever that is able to produce such varied and important results.

All this appears so easy and so simple. Nevertheless, how much circumspection, how much calculation and mature consideration. what great knowledge of the world and its requirements are necessary, in order not to do in this place too much, in that too littleto arrange and to superintend the execution. The merchant must have an eye for everything, and extend his observation over the whole earth, in order always to discern what is right, and to do it just at the right time; and for that there is needed great penetration, a great knowledge of mankind, much circumspection, attention, and integrity. Without these qualities he will never prosper, but will always work to his own disadvantage.

Mr. Westmore conducted a large business, which maintained relations with almost every part of the world. The productions of his manufactories went to Asia, Africa, and especially to South America; and in exchange for them he received the products of distant

lands, which out of his warehouses and magazines again travelled on to the continent of Europe, and filled his cash-box with glittering coin. There was an everlasting coming and going, an everlasting streaming in and flowing out; and the first and principal care was, that no interruption or stop should occur therein. For that there was need of circumspection and attention, and then of faithful, industrious workers, who could comprehend and punctually execute the wishes and intentions of the supreme conductor of the business.

Such a worker Jack had now for years proved himself to be, and by his good qualities won the confidence of his master in an eminent degree. The term of his apprenticeship had already expired, Mr. Westmore placed in his hands the most weighty affairs, and of all the many young people who worked in the business, Jack was universally admitted to be the most efficient. Good will and prudent action were both concentrated in him. Never could he be accused of the neglect of any duty; for when work sometimes accumulated, and the

day did not suffice for it, he was more willing to call in the night to his aid, than to grant himself any relaxation. His industry was indefatigable, his conscientiousness proved, his circumspection unquestionable, his fidelity inviolate. It showed itself on an occasion which allowed Mr. Westmore to see deeply into the soul of Jack, and again confirmed his confidence in him.

Jack's especial department was the management of the transmarine business with the West Indies and South America, and he kept up an uninterrupted correspondence with the largest firms in those countries. Mr. Westmore, of course, opened with his own hand all the letters which came in from the different parts of the world, wrote on them a few remarks, according to the nature of their contents, and then, without giving himself further trouble, handed them over to his servants for answer.

"Jack!" cried he one morning out of the latticed partition in which stood his desk.

Jack obeyed the call without delay; for he already knew that the West Indian letters

had been handed in to him. The mail from those parts had arrived the night before.

"Here, my worthy clerk, letters from St. Domingo, Jamaica, St. Thomas, and Cuba," said Mr. Westmore, handing over to him the correspondence, and retaining only one single letter. "All routine business, and I have no especial remarks to make on any of them. Only here, this letter from Don Ramiro Cabral in Havannah causes me considerable uneasiness. It informs me of a very weighty affair, and I fear that not much can be done in it."

"Don Ramiro Cabral?" answered Jack, somewhat astounded. "That is a good house, sir—perfectly solvent; and, besides that, it has rather a credit account with us than we with it. There is no cause for apprehension there, I think."

"The question is not about a loss or advantage to us, trusty Jack," replied Mr. Westmore. "I am well aware that Don Cabral is good for hundreds of thousands. The affair is the—but read the letter yourself; here it is."

Jack read it, and became very pensive and serious.

"I have done quite right," said he. "I myself recommended caution to Don Ramiro with regard to the firm of Jenkins and Son, in London. He must have received my letter too late. A bad business."

"But something or other might be done; at any rate, an attempt ought to be made, Jack," said Mr. Westmore. "I cannot personally take charge of the affair, for I cannot stay away from the business for days and weeks. Think over it yourself, Jack. You see, Don Cabral makes personal mention of you in this letter; he must, then, repose confidence in you, for which of course he has good reason. Consider the matter, and impart to me the view that you take of it. For to-day and to-morrow there is, of course, no danger."

Jack took the letter with him, placed it before him on his desk, and again perused it carefully from beginning to end.

Don Ramiro wrote information "that he had, agreeably to order, despatched a cargo of to-

bacco and cigars to the firm of Jenkins and Son, in London, and, in his reliance on the solvency of the house, contented himself with payment in bills of exchange; but that now distinct information had reached him that Jenkins and Son were in a state of insolvency, and that, therefore, their bills of exchange were not worth a single shilling. Consequently, if the cargo of tobacco should come into the hands of Jenkins and Son, it would be irrecoverably lost; so that this must be prevented, if possible, at any price. For that purpose he implored the aid of Mr. Westmore, and claimed the zeal and goodwill of Mr. Jack Bridewell, his correspondent."

It was a perplexing affair. How could the delivery of the goods be guarded against? The name of the ship and that of the captain were, it is true, mentioned; but where was the vessel to be discovered? Once on the Thames and in London, it could no longer be saved from the claws of the fradulent firm. It was necessary to lie in wait for it, to interest the harbour-masters in the cause, to be day and night upon the spot. It was a difficult

task, and required circumspection and activity.

But when had Jack Bridewell shunned labour and toil? He was not, indeed, personally acquainted with Don Ramiro Cabral; but he knew that he was an honourable man, and only asserting his own rights. Jack regarded it as a duty to save him from a very considerable loss. After mature deliberation, he resolved to do his best, and to perform a genuine act of kindness for his distant commercial friend.

He imparted this intention to Mr. Westmore.

"I expected no less from you, faithful one," answered the latter. "I only wished not to anticipate your decision. I grant you leave of absence as long as you require it; and I will myself, whilst you are away, attend to your business—at all events, to the most necessary and important portion of it. Money you need not spare, for Don Ramiro will willingly reimburse us for all the expenses incurred in his behalf. I will furnish you also with a letter of credit on our banker in

London. When do you think of starting, Jack?"

"This very day, sir," answered Jack. "I should not wish to lose a minute, and would rather arrive too early than too late."

"I perfectly agree with you. Set out, in God's name, and I wish you all fortune on the way!"

Jack, in fact, did not lose a single minute. He packed his trunk, placed in his pocket Don Ramiro's letter, to which a legally authorised full power to act was appended, and travelled post to London. Arrived there, he scarcely allowed himself time to eat a few mouthfuls, and immediately sought out the harbour-master and a solicitor, who was to give him the advantage of his professional advice. The ship in question had not yet arrived.

"Luckily for the consigner," thought the solicitor. "If once the freight found its way into the hands of Messrs. Jenkins and Son, we should have some difficulty in snatching it out of them again. I even fancy that it has already been sold, and that Jenkins has

pocketed the money that it fetched. Such things do happen."

"So much the more pressing and necessary it is to take possession of the ship, and prevent its running into the Thames," said Jack. "What is to be done, harbour-captain?"

"I can give you no better advice than this: to betake yourself without delay to Dover, and there to set people to lie in wait for the ship," replied the official. "I doubt not that Jenkins and Son are also on the watch at Dover; and whichever of you arrives first on board, becomes the owner of the cargo. It is true that Jenkins and Son can dispute the ownership; but a tedious judicial process is required for that, and long before you come to the end of it the villains will have unshipped the freight and disposed of it, and nothing will remain for you but empty disappointment. Therefore, hasten as much as you can; the first comer will have the advantage."

"I am off at once!" said Jack. "Mr. Wilson" (that was the name of the lawyer), "will you accompany me?"

"Well, I think it would, at all events, do no harm if I were to go with you," answered the solicitor. "But you surely will not travel the whole night?"

"Day or night, early or late, it is all one to me," answered Jack. "The man who wishes conscientiously to discharge his duty, ought not to be scared by difficulties. Within one hour I shall be prepared for the journey."

"Well, then, I suppose it must be so," said the lawyer, smiling. "I see you wish to strike the iron whilst it is hot. Meantime, adieu, I will go home to give a few more directions, and in an hour I will be with you again, Mr. Bridewell."

He took leave without further delay, and Jack, after he had received from the mouth of the experienced harbour-captain a few more instructions to regulate his proceedings, also hastened back to his quarters. Not a single minute did he lose in hurrying the preparations for his departure. On the arrival of Mr. Wilson, the carriage stood waiting; and through night and fog, both were on their way to Dover.

" Had the Bellona already arrived?"

Jack lost no time in making the necessary inquiries, and sought out the harbour-master of Dover, as he had done that of London. The latter had furnished him with a letter to the former, and this proved to him of great utility.

"Strange!" said the officer; "you are not the only one who is waiting for the *Bellona*. A plenipotentiary of a London house of business is also impatiently longing for the arrival of this ship."

"Pray, was it not a plenipotentiary of Jenkins and Son?" inquired Jack.

"No; it was some other name. I do not remember it at this moment," replied the harbour-captain. "However, he was in possession of the requisite papers, and we cannot prevent him from taking possession of the ship as soon as she comes into harbour."

"Not even if I show you this letter and this full authorisation of the despatcher of the Bellona?" asked Jack.

"Not even then, sir," replied the captain, shrugging his shoulders. "Nothing but a

judicial order could empower me to detain the ship. But to obtain this, a great many forms must be gone through, and much time expended."

"Then the *Bellona* shall never run in, if I can possibly hinder it!" said Jack with decision.

"But what will you do?"

"I will take a boat, and cruise before the entrance of the harbour till the *Bellona* heaves in sight," answered Jack.

"That would, of course, be the best thing you could do," chimed in the harbour-captain, casting a complacent glance on Jack, whose zeal and quick determination seemed greatly to please him. "But do not fancy to yourself the thing too easy, sir. It is no pleasure to spend whole days and nights in an open boat without shelter, and to be peering incessantly with the telescope. Night and cold wind are anything but pleasant, and several days may yet elapse ere the ship comes in."

"I am prepared for all, and not deficient in patience, captain," answered Jack. "An im-

portant duty of friendship is in question, and I am resolved to perform it, whatever may happen to me in doing so."

"Well, young man, I am glad that you are so well-disposed and so courageous," said the harbour-captain in a friendly tone. "I will, therefore, give you a piece of useful advice. Look out for old Bob Smith. He is the first boatman in Dover; and if he promises you his services, you may count upon him. Go to him—or wait—it would be still better if I sent for him; I know that he is rather partial to me. You can trust him entirely and without reserve. The man is true as steel, and would rather allow himself to be torn in pieces than betray you."

Bob was sent for, and made his appearance soon afterwards. The harbour-master introduced Jack to him, and, without more ado, acquainted him with the nature of the business, and for what object his goodwill and his boat were in requisition. Bob listened quietly to all.

"You say, then, captain, that this young gentleman is acting perfectly right in what he is undertaking?" after a few moments of serious meditation.

"Entirely, I give you my word," replied the harbour-master. "The object is to rescue a valuable cargo from the claws of a defrauder, and to secure it to the lawful owner."

"Well, then, I am your man, sir," said the old boatman, turning to Jack. "I will only tell you that I was charged by another party to watch for the *Bellona*, and to announce her arrival as soon as she comes in sight. But the thing appeared to me suspicious, and I declined the commission. Old Bob does not mix himself up in dirty affairs. But with you, sir, as the captain answers for you, and your business is an honourable one—with you I will sail, and murky indeed must be the fog that falls on the sea, if we do not catch the *Bellona* just at the right time."

"That is capital; I thank you, friend," said Jack with warmth, extending his hand to the old man. "Fix your reward yourself; I will not be niggardly."

"Pooh! I desire no more than my due," answered the old man—"ten shillings a day—

and if the *Bellona* runs into our net, and you feel inclined to give a little extra to my people, do as you please."

"All right; I shall not be ungrateful," Jack assured him. "When can we go out to sea?"

"Within ten minutes. I require only time to store the provisions in the boat."

"Well, I am ready, and will accompany you," said Jack.

"And here," interposed the captain, fetching a telescope from his writing-desk, "take this with you; it will do you good service, for it is an exceedingly good glass."

Jack did not refuse to avail himself of the captain's kindness, thanked him heartily, and then went off as fast as he could to take his post as watchman on the sea. Mr. Wilson did not accompany him, but remained behind in Dover, in order to watch the opposite party and to be near at hand if any step should be necessary to be taken.

The harbour-captain approved of this arrangement, as Jack might possibly miss the ship when he was out in the boat; and so

Jack put out to sea only with Bob and two rowers.

lack soon discovered that he could not have trusted himself in better hands than to the old, experienced boatman, Bob Smith. With the greatest skill the man steered the boat, and at the same time glanced incessantly over the water. Not a single sail which, like a white gull, appeared in the distant horizon, escaped his eye; and, with a certainty which called forth Jack's astonishment, he discerned even in the far distance to what nation the ship that was sailing belonged. French, Danish, Spanish, Swedish, or German ships he allowed quietly to go by, without making any effort whatever to get alongside of them; but no West Indiaman could come near, without his having reached the precise distance from which he could read the name of the ship from the planks.

Jack expressed his astonishment at it.

"Yes, young gentleman," answered the old man with a knowing smile; "if you wished and were obliged to run after every vessel, it would fare badly with us. Before we had one, four others would be out of sight, and it would be a vain and hopeless chase. Thank God, my eyes are still good, and the flags and rigging of every nation that has ships on the sea are known to me. This or that fellow might, perchance, escape us in the night; but luckily we have bright moonshine, and we must trust a little to our good fortune and to the goodness of our cause. Make yourself quite easy; the *Bellona* shall not elude us, unless she can make herself completely invisible."

Jack soon found that he could perfectly rely on the old man, and reposed in him the fullest confidence, although at the same time he did not neglect to do also his part. He peered incessantly round the horizon with the telescope, and gave it to the old man, only when it was in question to ascertain the nationality of a ship, when it was yet far distant.

The boat cruised here and there without rest or intermission. Ship after ship sailed by, but none was the so longingly-expected *Bellona*. Day died away, the sun sank in the sea, the moon rose; neither Jack nor old

Bob thought of sleep; they did but redouble their watchfulness. Not till morn again brightly dawned did the old boatman grant himself a short repose.

"Keep a look out, sir," said he to Jack.
"As soon as you descry a sail, awake me."

He slept for an hour, and then was again fresh and brisk at his post, and insisted that Jack and one of the boatmen should also go to sleep.

"Make no ceremony," said he to Jack, when the latter hesitated. "A little sleep brightens the eyes, and you may rely upon me."

Jack no longer refused; it would have seemed to show want of confidence in the honest old man. He slumbered awhile, and on awaking felt himself greatly invigorated and refreshed.

Another day and another night glided away; the *Bellona* did not show herself. Still Jack tarried patiently at his post. It was not till the fourth day, when his strength was almost entirely exhausted—and even old Bob's courage began to droop—that his perseverance was to be crowned with a happy result.

Towards sunset a sail appeared at the horizon, and quickly approached, with a favourable wind, nearer and nearer.

"It is a West Indiaman," said Bob; "but whether or not it be the one that we are seeking, must soon show itself. Brisk, men; row up to it!"

The boatmen obeyed, and, as if with wings, the little boat glided over the smooth water. The masts of the ship rose higher and higher out of the sea; now, too, the dark line of the hull showed itself; the fore-quarter rose and sunk on the waves, and Jack, with intense anxiety, kept his telescope levelled at it. Suddenly he uttered a loud cry of joy.

"It is she," he exclaimed exultingly. "I have discerned the figure-head of the *Bellona*—the gilded helmet and the coat of mail under the bowsprit!"

"Give it me, sir; give me the glass for a moment!" said old Bob, hastily raising himself up.

Jack handed it to him.

He looked through it only for a minute, and then, satisfied, turned away. "Forward briskly, my lads!" he cried joyfully to the boatmen. "Our cruise is coming to an end. It is the Bellona."

With a loud hurrah, the men plied their oars, and urged the boat forwards with double speed. In less than a quarter of an hour they lay alongside the *Bellona*, and hailed her. They were allowed to come on board; Jack produced his warrant, and the captain professed himself ready to follow all his directions.

With a favourable wind they sailed into port. As they were running in they were hailed by a boat, which must likewise have been waiting for the *Bellona*.

"What's the matter?" cried the captain, by way of answer.

"Plenipotentiaries from Jenkins and Son," was the reply. "We wish here immediately to take possession of the freight of the *Bellona*. Let down the accommodation-ladder, captain."

"Exceedingly sorry, gentlemen," replied the captain ironically. "Jenkins and Son are come too late; the freight is already taken possession of by a warrant."

A curse rose up from the boat.

"Show it me," cried a voice.

"If you thoroughly insist on it, very willingly," answered the captain. "Down with the ladder!"

"It was let down alongside; a showily-dressed gentleman came on board, and the captain exhibited to him Jack's authority to act.

The gentleman stamped furiously on the ground.

"Curse it!" he exclaimed. "All in due form. Nothing more to be done. We have for just nothing at all been loitering in the Channel for three days and three nights."

"I am very sorry, sir," said the captain derisively; "but since you have now convinced yourself, I wish you all prosperity."

With suppressed rage, the man again got into his boat. The *Bellona*, however, sailed on, reached the harbour without mishap, and came to anchor.

The cargo was saved.

Jack generously rewarded old Bob and his men, returned to the former with many thanks the telescope which had been lent, and received his congratulations and those of Mr. Wilson, the solicitor.

Satisfied with the success of his exertions, he then returned home, gave his principal an account of his proceedings, and received from him also a good share of praise. A letter informed Don Ramiro Cabral that the cargo of the *Bellona* was saved; and with that the whole affair seemed to be ended.

Several months elapsed—Jack thought no more of the *Bellona*—when one day Mr. Westmore summoned him, at an unwonted hour, into his cabinet. Jack, astonished, obeyed the order, and was received by Mr. Westmore with a certain solemnity.

"My dear Jack," said he, "I have again received despatches from Don Ramiro Cabral, which regard you quite especially."

"Has anything particular again occurred?" inquired Jack, when his principal ceased speaking.

"No; this time there is no *Bellona* to be captured, or cruise to be made," answered Mr. Westmore. "The whole affair relates only to

you, Jack. Don Cabral wishes to receive you into his house and business, and makes you, through me, very splendid offers. A high salary—double that which you receive with me—and the first place in his counting-house are the advantages that he holds out to you. I think you will not hesitate to accede to Don Cabral's proposals."

Jack stood astounded, almost terrified, and looked on the ground. But only for a few moments did he consider; then shook his head, and looked at Mr. Westmore with open eyes and smiling.

"No, sir," said he; "I am very grateful to Don Cabral for his generous offer, but I must decline it."

"But why, Jack?" asked Mr. Westmore eagerly. "You are by so doing throwing away a chance that will perhaps never again be offered to you."

"I am perfectly satisfied here, sir," answered Jack determinately and composedly.

"You are a child—a veritable child!" replied his principal. "Are you afraid to cross the sea? Or do you dread a tropical climate?

Or what other reasons have you for rejecting such an offer?"

"Nothing of the kind, sir," said Jack. "I have but one single motive; allow me to keep it secret."

"No, no; I must know it," said Mr. Westmore, in a serious tone. "I mean it kindly, Jack. I cannot allow that you should frivolously and inconsiderately fling away your good fortune. Name to me your motive, Jack. I insist on it."

In spite of all reluctance, Jack was in the end compelled to yield to Mr. Westmore's persevering importunity.

"Well, then," said he at last, "you have interested yourself in my behalf, brought me up, instructed and maintained me for many long years, without my being in a position to render myself in any way worthy of your benefits, or to requite them by anything that I could do. Shall I at this time, when I can perhaps be useful to you, leave your house and devote myself to the service of a stranger? No, sir; that would be a deed of such shameful ingratitude, that I should never be able to

forgive myself for it. Besides that, I am quite comfortable with you. I want nothing; my good old mother, too, is happy. Why, then, should I go away? My soul longs not for a golden reward. Your esteem and goodwill, sir, are of greater value to me than the gold pieces of a stranger. I remain with you, sir; and never will I separate from you, unless you yourself bid me go."

"That God forbid!" answered Mr. Westmore, gladdened and moved by the grateful attachment of his young friend. "You are verily a good and faithful servant, and I hope that you will never regret having shown yourself such. Well, then, you remain with me, my son, and—however, we shall see about the rest. Meantime, accept this brilliant pin; Don Ramiro Cabral sends it, and has charged me to hand it to you in case any circumstances whatever should hinder you from entering into his service. Wear the pin, as a well-earned acknowledgment of your prudent and resolute conduct; you have honestly deserved it."

With pleasing surprise, Jack received the valuable present, and wrote to Don Ramiro

Cabral a grateful and cordial letter. Not a word more was said about his quitting Mr. Westmore's business. He discharged his duty afterwards as industriously and conscientiously as he had previously done, and no other change was provisionally made than that Jack was henceforth treated with really paternal kindness by Mr. Westmore, and admitted into his family circle. Almost daily he spent his evenings there, and was regarded with the most kindly and cordial sentiments by Mrs. Westmore and her children—two daughters and an amiable boy. Many happy hours he passed in the midst of them, and never regretted his having refused the splendid offers of Don Ramiro Cabral.

## CHAPTER VII.

A FOOLISH SON IS HIS MOTHER'S SORROW.

OHN in the meantime was living merrily from day to day, and squandering, in play and other dissipa-

tions, as much money as if the wealth which he had inherited would never come to an end. His mother felt herself exceedingly unhappy about all this, and spared neither admonitions, nor entreaties, nor tears, to lead him to a better way. But her representations remained for a long time without any result, till John himself made the unwelcome discovery, that he had already squandered nearly the half of his legacy.

Now at last he was appalled, and came, in some degree, to his senses. If he continued the life which he had hitherto led, he could not fail again to become a beggar; and this event was surrounded with too many terrors, for him not to feel seriously anxious at the prospect of its occurring. Was he again to fall so low as to be obliged to make up parcels, and to work as a day-labourer? No! There was still time to employ the remainder of his property in some profitable way; and, after many a struggle with his evil inclinations and habits, he came to the determination of yielding to the entreaties of his mother, and engaging in a business.

His friends derided and ridiculed him when he communicated to them his intentions, and the greater part of them entirely abandoned him. If there was an end of their revelries; if John no longer paid for their carousals, and no longer lent them money, of what further use was he? They would have no more to do with him, and shunned him when he met them.

John expressed to his mother his annoyance at this treatment.

"How can you be surprised, my son?" she answered. "Such is the friendship of the

world! This you have already once experienced; and how would it be if you were compelled to make the experiment of it for the second time, and without the resources which would enable you to despise those false friends? How if you were to find yourself again in a position which would constrain you to apply to them for help and assistance? Do you believe that there would be one amongst all these companions of yours, that would hold out a finger to you to raise you up out of the dust? Just answer me seriously, my son."

John shook his head.

"In truth," said he, "I do not believe that there would be one, in spite of their having lived for so long a time at my expense. Not one of them would give me a shilling to save me from starvation. It is fortunate that my eyes have been opened whilst there is yet time. May Heaven preserve me from ever finding myself again in the sad predicament of being dependent on others!"

"Heaven has really done enough for you already, my son," answered the mother. "It is high time that you should now think of

doing something for yourself. The bread of poverty tastes bitter—think of that!"

"You are right, mother," answered John, with an involuntary shudder. "I will do my best to prevent our ever having again to eat this bread."

John kept his word. He rushed into a feverish activity, arranged a counting-house, turned over the pages in the account books of his father, established commercial relations, took clerks and book-keepers into his service, and worked from morning till evening with a restless, almost inconceivable haste. But he was only too soon compelled to make the discovery, that he was deficient in very many branches of knowledge which are indispensable for the conducting of an extensive business, and bitterly did he now regret that he had not better employed the years of his youth. Something was always wrong in this place and that, and losses, sometimes very sensible ones, did not fail to occur, all which might easily have been avoided with a little insight and knowledge; and John became peevish, sullen, and neglectful. The natural

consequences of the faults that he had committed in his youth became obvious, and he had not sufficient energy and strength of character to counteract them. There would still have been time to recover what had been lost by past neglect; but constancy and perseverance were qualities which John did not possess, and, most unfortunately, he had taken into his business a man who encouraged and fostered his evil habits in every possible way.

Mr. Ward, the first book-keeper, was a skilful and expert business-man. He had offered his services to John, who had accepted them, although he had been warned against this man by Jack, who still retained kindly feelings towards his old acquaintance, whom he had known from his boyhood; and when he heard that John intended to establish himself in business, he had immediately hastened to him, and, as far as he could, assisted him with his advice.

John, who, at first at least, entertained a lofty idea of his own abilities, and fancied that he best understood everything, had, however, received these counsels very coldly and made but very little use of them. When Jack warned him about Mr. Ward, he even met with a rude repulse.

"I know my people, and can judge their actions without seeing through the spectacles of strangers," was his uncourteous answer. "I know not what you have to object against the man. He is expert with the pen, and is a shrewd, clever fellow."

"But, notwithstanding these qualifications, he was dismissed very suddenly by his former principal from his service, and it is whispered that he has to accuse himself of more than one act of infidelity. I advise you to be cautious, John."

"A vile calumny! Mr. Ward has told me all about it. His principal did not discharge him; but he left quite of his own accord, because he was not pleased with the way in which things went on in the house."

"Well, then, I will tell you plainly that Mr. Ward has lied, John. Mr. Westmore is acquainted with his former principal, and heard from his own mouth the assertion that the

man was not to be trusted, and that for that reason he summarily dismissed him."

"But he was obliged to pay him a whole year's salary, because he could not convict him of anything wrong."

"That is true; but it does not prove that Mr. Ward was a faithful servant. At any rate, his reputation does not stand very high; and if I were in your place, I would be wary, and not trust him too much."

"That is my affair," said John at last, curtly, and retained Mr. Ward in his service.

When Jack perceived that his words were now wasted, as they always had been before, he ceased all interference. John, however, as we have already mentioned, by degrees became persuaded that he had considerably over-rated his own abilities.

Mr. Ward, who was in truth a clever man, knew how to turn this to his advantage; and it was not long ere he was John's right-hand man, and the real conductor of the business. With the most refined cunning, he set to work to withdraw John gradually from affairs by taking on himself, with indefatigable activity,

all that John had neither the inclination nor the capacity to attend to.

"Why should you torment and tire yourself out, Mr. Collins?" said he. "The servants whom you pay are the proper persons to do the work, and it is enough if you superintend us and stimulate us by your presence. Nothing further is required. Leave everything else to me."

To these words, which harmonised with his most secret and eager inclinations, John listened but too readily. He willingly yielded; and when he perceived that in fact Mr. Ward . arranged and conducted his affairs with rare skill and great assiduity; when the losses ceased to occur, and the business grew more and more profitable, he delivered over by degrees all care and trouble to his first book-keeper, and gradually discovered that not even his presence was needed. Business went on briskly even when he was not there, and he learned more and more to regard Mr. Ward as an invaluable servant. He trusted him unreservedly with his cash-box; Mr. Ward received moneys, paid bills, signed exchanges and accounts, and

was, in a word, all in all. The rest of the servants obeyed his orders as if he were the master; and John showed himself highly pleased to be relieved from the burden and tedium of business. His presence in the counting-house was gradually limited to a few hours; at times he was not to be seen there for whole days, and at last he came only when he wanted cash, which Mr. Ward, of course, counted out to him with the greatest readiness.

It is true that occasionally he inquired, "How is business going on, Mr. Ward?" And invariably on these occasions Mr. Ward answered, with a smirking face and a profound obeisance, "Excellently, sir! You may make yourself perfectly easy."

John believed him implicitly, and was perfectly easy. He was frequently again to be seen in the society of his dissolute boon companions; he rode, drove, gambled again, and squandered much money. His mother observed these proceedings with deep concern.

"John, oh John! what has become of your

good resolutions?" she often said to him. "Reflect that sloth is the mother of poverty, and that the eye of the master makes a fat kitchen. You were going to work, and, to my sorrow, I cannot help seeing that you are giving yourself up to the most disgraceful laziness."

"Do leave me alone, mother!" was the answer of John. "Mr. Ward is always at his post, and business is going on exceedingly well. It would be quite superfluous for me to torment myself at the tedious desk. Mr. Ward attends to everything in the best possible manner; he is quite invaluable, and I am able to trust him without reserve."

"But your father, John, was wont to say, 'A good merchant trusts most to himself.' Be careful to whom you give your confidence, John."

John shrugged his shoulders, and cast the words of his mother to the winds, as he had done the warnings of Jack. At last he concerned himself no further with the business, but let all go on as it would.

This went on for a considerable time, when

John quite unexpectedly received a visit from Jack, to whom he not only had not spoken a word since the dispute about his first book-keeper and manager, but had also intentionally avoided him. He was, therefore, not a little astonished when Jack made his appearance.

"Mr. Bridewell," said he, in a cold and distant manner, "what gives me the honour of seeing you at my house?"

"Oh, speak not thus, speak not thus!" answered Jack, with cordiality. "Let us not forget that we were once school-mates, and that we have seen so many events in which we were both interested."

"Well, then, since you insist on it, so be it," replied John peevishly. "But you have not called on me without a motive and an especial cause. What, then, is the matter?"

"Yes, I have not come without a motive; I have come to warn you, and may Heaven grant that it may not be too late!" answered Jack. "To be brief, John, your book-keeper, Mr. Ward, is deceiving you."

"That is false!" ejaculated John with

vehemence. "You cannot bear the man, and therefore you calumniate him."

"I can prove to you what I assert," replied Jack with firmness. "Mr. Ward seeks to confirm you in the belief that your affairs are in a thriving condition; but I tell you that you are on the verge of ruin, and that you will find it very difficult to fulfil the important engagements which Mr. Ward has contracted, without saying a syllable to you about them. I know that in the course of a fortnight a sum of ten thousand pounds sterling must be paid in, and I much doubt if you will be able to pay it. Ask your Mr. Ward himself, if you mistrust my words. In my presence he will not venture to deny the facts."

John turned pale as death when he noted Jack's firmness and decision.

"That would be horrible, if it were true," he cried, ringing for his servant. "Go to the counting-house," he said to him imperiously; "Mr. Ward is to come to me immediately."

Pending the arrival of Mr. Ward, John paced the room in the most violent agitation. He could not hide his perturbation, and Jack regarded him with a mixture of contempt and compassion.

"In what a comfortable position this man might have been, if he had been only moderately industrious," thought he to himself. "Laziness and the love of pleasure are precipitating him into destruction, and God alone knows how deeply he must yet sink, if my unfavourable suppositions are well grounded."

Meantime Mr. Ward made his appearance, with his customary smiling face, and seemed quite unconcerned and innocent.

John rushed hurriedly up to him.

"Is it true, sir," said he, with a voice half choked with suppressed anguish; "is it true that we have been engaged in unsuccessful transactions, and have met with great losses? Answer with sincerity."

Mr. Ward shrugged his shoulders.

"Certainly," answered he, "it is true that we have sustained a few losses. I did not intend saying anything to you on the subject, for I am by no means without hopes that everything will yet be arranged."

" And must we really within a fortnight pay

in ten thousand pounds?" John further inquired. "Are we able to pay them?"

"Well, yes, I think, although our cash-box is not just at present particularly well filled," replied Mr. Ward, to all appearance perfectly tranquil, and without allowing the smile to disappear from his lips. "But why do you disturb yourself about it? Pray leave all solely and entirely to me. I shall soon find an expedient, and I am only surprised that people should have troubled you with such things."

"Is it certain that you will be able to find an expedient?" asked John, breathing again.

"Quite certain, beyond all doubt," replied Mr. Ward, in the soothing tone of the most entire conviction. "Pray do not listen to the chatter and tale-bearing of strangers," he added, casting a malicious side-glance at Jack. "Come to me when you wish for an explanation, and I will not withhold it from you. In large businesses one loses and one gains. We have met with some losses; we shall know how to cover them by profits on other occasions. There is no cause for anxiety, what-

ever insinuations may have been made to you."

"And can I believe you—unreservedly believe you, Mr. Ward?" inquired John, greatly relieved.

"Certainly, without reserve!" was the answer.

"Then all is right!" exclaimed John. "Do you see plainly, Jack, that you have deceived yourself, or that you have been deceived?"

"I see now that my presence here is superfluous, and that you are running blindly to ruin, John," answered Jack, taking up his hat. "You are determined that things shall not be better; so endure the fate that you are going to prepare for yourself through laziness and credulity."

Ere John could answer or detain him, he had vanished.

Mr. Ward smiled scornfully behind his back.

"Now, then, Mr. Collins," said he, after a pause; "now that that unbidden chatterer has left, we will speak with each other openly and without reserve. Had you not sent for

me, I should have come to you to-day of my own accord, and without your summons."

"What is the matter, Mr. Ward?" inquired John, again violently alarmed. "What more can you have to say to me?"

"What I did not choose to say in the presence of that meddlesome puppy," replied Mr. Ward. "A merchant ought not to allow others to peep at his cards; and if I had spoken out freely, you would have been irrecoverably ruined. Now it can still be prevented, if you possess courage and determination."

"But, good God! what shall I be obliged to hear?" exclaimed John.

"Nothing further, Mr. Collins, than that you are completely ruined. The cash-box is empty, and not a tile on the roof of this house any longer belongs to you. In plain terms we have been unsuccessful in business, and unfortunately it is impossible to avert the consequences of it."

John uttered a cry of horror, and sank, pale as death, breathless, and half swooning, into the corner of a sofa. For some moments he struggled painfully for composure. Then suddenly he sprang up, rushed on Mr. Ward, seized him with a ferocious grasp, and shook him.

"And of that you are the cause, knave and scoundrel!" he exclaimed, panting with rage. "You have precipitated me into ruin, hypocritical villain! Oh, my God! why did I not hearken to the warnings of a faithful friend, who was acting towards me with honour and sincerity!"

Mr. Ward lost neither his equanimity nor his imperturbable smile.

"Hands off, sir!" said he quietly, giving John a push, which sent him reeling on the sofa. "Listen to me, and be rational. You can save yourself, if you please; but what is done must be done with caution, cunning, and circumspection. No more reproaches and no more insults, sir, I beg of you, or I leave you to your fate; and you will then be able to see how far you can go without my advice and assistance. However, I can tell you beforehand—into the DEBTORS' IAIL!"

John felt himself annihilated.

"Am I only to act with decision?" said "Well, then, I am decided—decided for everything. But what can I do? Speak!"

Mr. Ward bent down to John, brought his lips close to his listening ear, and whispered:

"You must draw a few forged exchanges, get in the moneys, empty your own cash-box, and then take ship for America. In this way we shall bring together some twenty thousand pounds, and you will be saved. I repeat to

<sup>&</sup>quot;Then speak, Mr. Ward!" said he.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Well, now," continued his interlocutor, "circumstances are precisely as I have stated to you; and it is perfectly correct that in a fortnight we must pay down ten thousand pounds sterling, which sum there is nothing at hand to cover. We have only two thousand pounds left, so that your position is rather a desperate one. But up to this time no one knows of the sad state in which things are; your credit is still unshaken, and if you are willing to act with despatch and decision, you will certainly be obliged to abscond, but you need not be reduced to beggary."

you, your credit is yet unshaken, and the—business must succeed if you do not loiter, but go boldly to work. In the course of a few days—possibly even to-morrow—it may be too late. So make up your mind speedily."

Pale as death and trembling, John listened to the words of the tempter.

"Forger of bills of exchange!" he muttered.
"Thief, culprit, felon! Horrible!"

"Not so horrible as to be a beggar, and to be dragged into the prison for debtors," coldly replied Mr. Ward. "Follow my advice; my intentions are kind. In America nobody inquires how you have got your money, and you are just as respectable there as any one else. So make up your mind at once."

"But my mother! my poor mother!" exclaimed John, racked with despair.

"Why be concerned about your mother?" replied Mr. Ward. "Nobody can hurt her; and when you are in a place of safety, you can either forward her money or send for her. Be not such a child, Mr. Collins! Act with determination, and all will and must go on well. Before the forgery is discovered, you will long

have been sailing in the open sea, and will be able to laugh at your pursuers."

"No," answered John; collecting himself with an effort of despair; "no, I will sooner die than be guilty of a crime that must brand me with eternal infamy, and may bring me to the jail. Leave me, Mr. Ward; I wish to hear nothing more."

"Well, as you please, sir; it is your affair, not mine," replied Mr. Ward, somewhat scornfully. "I shall get out of the business with clean hands. However—reserving to you the chance of discovering something else and something better—I will leave here the exchanges, to which only the signature is wanting. I know well that it will not be difficult for you to counterfeit the handwriting of some of our richest London correspondents so well, that it will be undistinguishable from the genuine sign-manual. And, once more, I advise you to proceed to action before it is too late. Good-bye, sir!"

With a low bow he left the room, and a malicious smile quivered on his lips, as he descended the steps that led to the counting-house. "He will most surely bite," he muttered, "and then—away with him! He must not be left at liberty, otherwise, with the aid of his good friend Jack, he might come upon me unawares, and trace out the channel into which the money out of his cash-box has been diverted. When once I have him safely lodged in jail, I have nothing more to fear."

With these words he resumed his place in the counting-house, and nobody could guess from his smiling mien what treacherous designs he was hiding behind this smile.

John meanwhile remained in his room in a state bordering on despair, whilst tears of rage, anguish, and repentance streamed from his eyes. What was he to do? What, for the love of Heaven? He wrung his hands, and racked with unspeakable torture, strode hurriedly, like a captured beast of prey, up and down his room. Horrible was the prospect of the future which yawned before his eyes like a precipice, ready to swallow him up. Was there then no means whatever of salvation? Must he become a beggar, and be hurried off to a dungeon? He shuddered at

the prospect, and glanced timidly at the narrow strips of paper which Mr. Ward had placed on the table in such a manner that they could not fail to meet his eyes at every turn.

"Only a few signatures, and you are saved!" he whispered to himself. "Ward is right! America is far distant, and besides that, my stay here cannot possibly be long."

But if the fraud should be discovered in course of time? If it should bring disgrace and infamy on his head? If he should be forced to put on the convict's dress? Good God!

Again he quickly withdrew from the table on which the exchanges lay, and turned his back on the temptation. Again he hurried up and down, wringing his hands.

Was there a means of salvation nowhere to be found? A fleeting thought of Jack flashed through his brain—he, the wise, the upright, the faithful one—he perchance might know of some expedient! But no, if he went to him, if he discovered himself to him, he flung away the only chance of saving himself from entire ruin: the BILLS OF EXCHANGE.

Again his eye rested on them, and a final combat took place in his soul. Once more virtue and duty struggled against the enticement to crime; once more he recoiled with horror before the ignominious act which might rob him of his honour, and perhaps also of his freedom. But on the other side: Poverty and the debtors' jail!

He saw nothing further, he thought of nothing else; the idea did not even occur to him that salvation might still perhaps be possible, if he would give his full confidence to Jack, if he would ask him for counsel and assistance.

"It must be," he muttered between his clenched teeth, and wiped the cold sweat from his pale and yet burning brow. "It must be done," he repeated, "and it must be done speedily, this very day, for to-morrow it might be too late, said Mr. Ward. Well then, the drowning man catches at a straw, and asks not if he thrusts another man to the bottom of the sea, if he can only save his own life. I commit no murder, I wish only to take back that of which others have robbed me, that of

which they have swindled and cheated me. Forwards! it must be!"

He seated himself at the table, and placed the exchanges before him. His hand trembled like an aspen-leaf as he took up the pen, and when he dipped it into the inkstand, it slipped from his fingers. He sobbed aloud. Again he took up the pen, and this time his hand no longer shook. "To America!" he whispered, and the pen moved scratch, scratch over the paper, and the fateful signature stood on the bill of exchange, deceptively imitating the cipher of one of his mercantile friends in London. Twice more, three times more he repeated the attempt, and a bitter smile played over his mouth, as he surveyed the papers with a scrutinizing glance, and then rose from the table.

"I have succeeded," he muttered. keenest eye could not discern the falsification. The sums specified on the exchanges will be paid, I shall take possession of them, and this very night will see me on the way to the sea-coast. Once on board, I am concealed and saved. I can land in America under another name, and perhaps I may be fortunate enough to earn there so much, that I may be able to compensate for my misdemeanour, and replace the sums purloined."

Whilst he was seeking in this manner to hush his conscience, he heard in the ante-chamber steps which were approaching his room, and hastily removed the papers from the table and concealed them. The next moment Mr. Ward entered; a glance showed him that the papers had vanished, and a malignant flash, fugitive and scarcely perceptible, beamed from his eyes.

"Well, Mr. Collins?" said he.

"Here!" answered John, drawing the exchanges from his pocket. "Have those moneys got in, and order for me a post-chaise with four horses. Precisely at twelve to-night I shall start."

"Bravo!" said Mr. Ward. "I thought to myself that you would be rational, sir. Count on my zeal and punctuality. Within two hours you have the money, and ten minutes before midnight a comfortable travelling-carriage will be ready at the door. Which direction will you take, Mr. Collins?"

"To Liverpool. Ships are always lying there ready to sail abroad."

"Quite right; I see that you have gone to work with decision and mature deliberation. I wish you success in the matter. In the course of two hours you will see me again."

With these words the book-keeper left, taking with him the forged exchanges. Again John's conscience bestirred itself. He was on the point of calling Mr. Ward back, requesting him to give back the bills of exchange, and destroying them. He was already seizing the door-latch, when suddenly poverty and the jail again presented themselves like dark shadows to his mind, and his hand sank feebly down, a suppressed sigh forced itself from his breast, and, as if crushed in body and soul, he threw himself on the sofa, and hid his pale face in his hands.

According to his promise, Mr. Ward returned after the lapse of two hours, this time with a face radiant with joy.

"Success!" said he. "No one entertained

even the most remote suspicion. Here are the moneys, sir, all in good, new bank-notes. It is a large sum, and yet you can put it comfortably into your breast-pocket. The chaise, too, is ordered, and so everything is arranged."

He laid a packet of bank-notes on the table, and John counted them mechanically, found the amount correct, and put them into a pocket-book.

"I thank you, Mr. Ward," he said in a low, hoarse tone. "You are a faithful servant."

The book-keeper was obliged to avert his face at this eulogy, or John must have remarked the derisive scorn which depicted itself in his features.

"Well, yes," he replied, after a short pause, "what I have done for you, another would not perhaps have ventured to do. However, I rely on proofs of your gratitude."

"Ah, I understand—I forgot," stammered John. "Here are two notes, each of a hundred pounds—are you satisfied with that, Mr. Ward?"

"If you will double the sum, yes," replied

the cunning rogue, perfectly aware that John was in his power.

Without gainsaying, John counted out twenty more notes, and handed them to the book-keeper.

"That's it! now all is settled," said the latter. "Have you any further commands, Mr. Collins?"

"One more request, sir. I cannot see my mother before my departure. When I am off, give her then the necessary explanations. I will write as soon as I have stepped on the safe soil of America."

"I will attend to it, rely upon me," asseverated Mr. Ward, and vanished.

John was once more alone, and locked his door, not to be disturbed by any one. Slowly the hours passed over him, tormented as he was by remorse and self-reproach, which he was not able to smother. At last came the night. Darkness veiled the earth, and the stars sparkled in the heavens. With beating heart John counted the minutes. Rest he could not; sleep was banished from his eyes. The belfry clock struck ten, eleven, a quarter

to twelve. Midnight was now quite nigh, and at any moment the carriage which had been ordered might come. John felt his breast-pocket, in order to convince himself that the dearly-purchased bank-notes were safe, wrapped himself in a cloak, and put on his hat. No sooner was all this accomplished, when he heard the rolling of a carriage driving up at a brisk trot. "There it is," he muttered, opened the door gently, and glided softly down the stairs. All was still. His poor mother was probably reposing in the soundest sleep. Now the carriage stopped, and at the same instant John stood in the street.

"Is it you, Mr. Collins?" asked a whispering voice.

"Of course, Mr. Ward! What brings you here at this hour?"

"I could not allow you to depart without having seen you once more. Are you quite sure that you have the cash for the forged exchanges quite safe?"

"Silence, man! Do not speak of it! If any one should hear! Where is the carriage? I cannot see."

With hasty, yet silent and cautious steps, John advanced to the indicated spot, found the carriage, opened the door, and was on the point of springing in. At that instant a hand placed itself on his shoulder, and a deep voice said:

"Halt, Mr. Collins! In the name of the law I arrest you for forgery and swindling!"

John uttered a frightful cry. "Betrayed!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, betrayed, sir, and indeed by your own accomplice, who probably has his private and especial motives for doing so. Stir not from the spot, Mr. Ward! You also are my prisoner. Seize him, constable!"

Mr. Ward, who was standing quite near, and who in all probability had not foreseen or even surmised this result with regard to his own person, was so bewildered, that he allowed himself to be secured without offering any resistance.

"Mr. Ward! he—he has betrayed me!" exclaimed John. "Oh, the scoundrel!"

<sup>&</sup>quot;There, under the shadow of the trees."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Good! Fare you well, Mr. Ward!"

"Scoundrel yourself!" retorted with vehemence Mr. Ward, who had speedily recovered his composure. "And you, sir," said he, turning to the police-officer, "what authority have you to lay hands on me? You will have to pay dearly for such a proceeding."

"Quiet, man! waste no more words," replied the officer sternly and harshly. "We are acquainted with your artifices. Remember Mr. Canning, your former principal, the moneyletters which you have intercepted, and the way in which you contrived to deceive Mr. John Collins. It is useless for you to lie! The proofs are in our hands. So march forwards."

Mr. Ward burst forth into a fierce imprecation. "Now then," said he, "I see that you are possessed of full information, and yet I should like to know who has tracked my steps so closely."

"Your thanks for the whole and sole management of the affair are due to Mr. Jack Bridewell, who will appear against you as your accuser," replied the officer. "Had he been able to surmise that you would have instigated

the unfortunate Mr. Collins to the forging of bills of exchange, he would have prevented this also. But in truth he could not imagine such a crime. But mount into the carriage; you too, Mr. Collins. Instead of taking you to Liverpool, it will be to prison."

Both the prisoners obeyed. A constable took his seat by their side, and the carriage rattled off.

"You, my instigator and also my betrayer! Villain that you are!" furiously cried out John.

"And you, booby that you are!" retorted Mr. Ward with audacious scorn. "Blame not me, but your own idleness and stupidity, which alone enabled me to manage your affairs to my own advantage. He who has learned nothing, and will not learn anything, who indulges only in laziness, and in blind infatuation confides and leaves everything to strangers. must not afterwards be surprised if he is deceived and cheated. You have to ascribe every misfortune to your own conduct, and it would be ridiculous to make me responsible for it. No one else in my position would have acted differently."

"Jack Bridewell would!" rejoined John with a sigh.

"Well then, why did you not hearken to him, when he warned you and gave you good advice?" scornfully retorted Mr. Ward. "Your idleness, your inclination to spending, your love of pleasure did not allow of it. Your misery is the natural consequence of your faults. Now bear it in its full extent."

"And what has it benefited you, Mr. Ward, to have ruined me in order to enrich yourself?"

"Not a whit! I have encountered some one shrewder than myself, and he has unmasked me. One must put up with that, and I do not complain. You would do well by taking example of me."

The carriage now rattled through a long gateway, and stopped the next moment in the courtyard of the prison. The two culprits were forced to alight, and were conducted each into a separate cell. As the door closed behind him, John sobbed aloud, and the frightful weight of his misfortune cast him to the ground. To such a pitch of woe had laziness

and frivolity brought him. He was pining in jail, disgraced, a common thief, and his mother — John shuddered and groaned when he thought of her, and all the misery which he had heaped on her grey head.

### CHAPTER VIII.

#### TIME AND TIDE WAIT FOR NO MAN.

HAT had been affirmed concerning
Jack by the detective who had arrested John and Mr. Ward, was per-

fectly true. Jack would willingly have saved John, and spared himself no pains to trace out the artifices of Mr. Ward, to unmask him, and to snatch John from his snares. Had it not been for John's forgery, to which Mr. Ward urged him, in order afterwards treacherously to get rid of him, Jack's good intentions would perhaps have succeeded. But now all was lost, and Jack must of necessity desist from his well-meant endeavours, and leave John to the sad fate which he had brought on himself. Soon he was entirely to lose sight of him, as a highly important and responsible negotia-

tion was confided to him by his principal, and one which would require his absence from home for many weeks.

"My dear Jack," Mr. Westmore one day said to him, "I have a great inclination to venture an enterprise which holds out the prospect of a sure and great profit, if it is ably and conscientiously conducted."

"And what sort of an enterprise may that be, if I may be allowed to ask, sir?"

"Well, you know, Jack, from our correspondence with South America, that certain commodities, especially silk, linen, and cotton goods, are in great demand there, and fetch a high price, at the same time that they can be obtained from the factories here in superabundance and at a cheap rate. If one were to freight a ship with goods of that kind, and despatch it to America, before the favourable opportunity passes by, a very considerable profit must infallibly be realized."

"Beyond doubt, sir; only one must not delay, but set to work with great expedition. He who first takes advantage of circumstances and commences operations, will secure the most lucrative share of the business."

"I have, as I have told you, a great desire to do this, my dear Jack. But there are considerable difficulties attending it. I myself cannot attend to the affair, as it would keep me months, perhaps even longer than a year, away from here. And yet it involves so much responsibility, that it requires a man in whom the most unlimited confidence can be reposed. Where am I to find such a man?"

"Certainly, that will be difficult, sir."

"I know indeed of some one," continued Mr. Westmore, smiling to himself; "I only doubt if he will accede to my proposal. The execution of the undertaking is not unattended with danger. The distant sea-voyage, the coasting from one harbour of South America to the other, where there is continual peril from storms and cliffs, the yellow fever and other contagious maladies, render it a hazardous adventure."

"He who is active in his calling ought not to fear danger," answered Jack. "Man is everywhere in the hands of God." "Very true, my dear Jack. However, few men think of that. Besides all this, the supercargo must be master of the French and Spanish, languages, and display unwearied activity, if others are not to anticipate and supplant him."

"Quite true," replied Jack. "He must not for a moment give way to indolence. However, all that is not the principal point, it appears to me, sir."

"And what may then be the principal point, Jack?"

"Well, sir, a ship freighted with goods such as you have mentioned is a very valuable and precious property, for it certainly represents pretty nearly a hundred thousand pounds sterling. Where will you find a man who can give you security for such a monstrous sum? And to whom would you without surety confide so valuable a cargo? Even an honourable man might under so strong a temptation go astray. Suppose he should sell the goods, get in the money, and regard it as a nice booty? If he does not return of his own accord, where will you seek him in wide and

distant America? It will not do, sir. Unless you personally superintend the undertaking, I regard it as impracticable, or at any rate as exceedingly venturesome."

Mr. Westmore again smiled.

"As to the security, I am perfectly satisfied," replied he. "Yes, yes, my dear fellow, you need not look at me with such an air of astonishment. My man is as safe as if it were myself."

- "Impossible! Who can that be?" exclaimed Jack.
  - "Do you not guess, my friend?"
- "No, sir; I cannot imagine that there is any one, *i.e.* a servant in the business, who can give you security in hard cash for such an amount."
- "Who talks of security in hard cash? I have securities which are of equal worth. Do you not guess, you simple, short-sighted creature? Well, then, I suppose I must name the man to you. You know him personally, sir. It is Jack Bridewell, head clerk in the service of Mr. Westmore. Do you not believe

that one could unhesitatingly confide to him a still greater value?"

Jack became pale and red; he trembled, and speech failed him.

"Oh, sir," said he at last, and tears of emotion and happiness rolled down his cheeks, "how highly you honour me! How can I thank you for this? Truly, this is the proudest and brightest moment of my life."

"Oh, thou good and faithful servant," answered Mr. Westmore solemnly, in the words of the Evangelist, "thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will set thee over many things! Yes, Jack, thou mayest well be proud at this moment, for rightly by thy industry and integrity hast thou earned for thyself this my confidence, which I would not repose in any second person. Thou art the man that I require, and the only question is, if thou art willing to conduct the enterprise."

"Pray do not ask that question, sir," replied Jack, with the expression of the deepest emotion. "Put my gratitude to the severest tests, and I hope that you will at all times find it pure and genuine. I will go on board when-

ever you order me to do so, and you shall have no cause to complain of my want of zeal and industry."

"That I am sure of beforehand. But the long voyage?"

"It is undertaken in your service."

"The dangers of the sea, the storms, the deadly fevers?"

"I fear them not in your service. God will be with me, if I discharge my duty. I count on His protection."

"And your mother, Jack?"

"She will feel happy when she hears what confidence is reposed in me by my kind master. As to what concerns life and death, she relies, as I do, on God's fatherly guidance and providence."

"Well, then, we have exactly the man that we require," said Mr. Westmore, pressing Jack's hand. "Go in peace, my son, and may the Lord grant that you may return in joy. I knew that I could reckon on your willingness, and the ship in which you as supercargo are to sail to the coasts of America, lies in the harbour. The captain is instructed and

directed to obey all your orders as if they were mine. You have only to provide the cargo. Make your purchases entirely according to your own judgment—in all that you are free to act just as you please. I will assign you the necessary cash, and in a fortnight you will, I think, be in readiness to sail."

"For that, I shall require at the most only a week, if you give me carte blanche, sir. Every day that is won may bring with it its advantages. But if you will allow me, I will take with me in addition to the goods which you have specified, a lot of steel manufactures. I know that they are in great demand in those parts."

"Anything you please, my friend!" answered Mr. Westmore assentingly. "Regard the undertaking quite as your own, and proceed just as if the advantage and loss were on your own account."

"Yes, that I will do, and you shall be no loser by it," asserted Jack with a courageous spirit, as he was fully conscious to himself of his honesty of purpose. "I will set to work without delay."

With a zeal which allowed itself no rest a single hour of the day, Jack plunged into the He made important pureddy of business. chases, and in so doing showed himself so skilful, and at the same time so circumspect, that he effected them materially cheaper than Mr. Westmore had calculated. With secret joy the latter watched his favourite, addressed to him now and then a word of approval, but in every other respect allowed him to do as he thought proper, without at all interfering. Jack was to afford a proof of what he could do. His industry and fidelity he had sufficiently demonstrated; now he was to show that he could act independently with circumspection and wisdom. After a week, as he had previously asserted, he had completed his purchases, and had sent them all and every one to the port, where the captain received them, and stowed them away in the hold of the vessel. On the evening of the eighth day Jack handed in the bills to his principal, and received from him the necessary authority to act. The farewell was short but cordial. Mr. Westmore wished Jack much prosperity on

his voyage, and Jack for the last time vowed zeal and fidelity.

After that he hastened to his mother, and received her blessing. Then he stepped into a carriage which was standing ready at the door, and travelled during the whole night to his place of destination. He arrived without accident at the seaport, cleverly and speedily arranged what yet remained to be done, and was able at last with a favourable wind to enter on his distant voyage.

"You have made us pretty warm and kept us moving, Mr. Bridewell," said Captain Brook to Jack, as they both stood on the deck, and enjoyed the splendid weather. "We all had our hands full, to stow away the many bales and packages which you despatched to us. But I like that! anything but idleness, which is the prelude to all ruin."

"Certainly, captain," replied Jack in a friendly tone. "I fancy, too, that we shall not indulge very much in idleness. We must take time by the forelock, arrive the first on the spot, and not allow any one to anticipate us. I trust to you for that, captain."

"I will do, on my part, sir, what wind and weather permit," said the stout-hearted, honest seaman. "But really, we must look to God in heaven to do the most."

"Let us hope in Him," answered Jack. "But we will both, captain, hold firm and true to each other, like righteous servants of our lord and owner. Mr. Westmore has reposed great confidence in us, captain."

"Yes, that he has," was the answer. "Still I hope he will not find himself deceived in either of us. Give me your hand, Mr. Bridewell! I am pleased with you. Shake hands, and let us always be good friends."

Jack shook hands with him, and in the best of understandings the two new friends continued their voyage.

It would lead us too far, were we to relate all that Jack accomplished, in his faithful eagerness to satisfy his conscientious feelings to their full extent. He was powerfully backed by Captain Brook, and Heaven befriended them, by sending for the most of the time a favourable breeze and propitious weather. They reached without accident the American

coast, sailed along it from one seaport to the other, and whenever the ship had cast anchor, Jack neglected no opportunity of working for the benefit and advantage of his principal. The occasion was favourable, so that the result of his transactions was eminently brilliant, to the great joy of the captain.

"By Heaven, Mr. Bridewell, you understand business," said he more than once, when Jack imparted to him confidential informations. "Mr. Westmore could not have confided this undertaking to a better man. But you really ought to spare yourself a little more than you do. You allow yourself too little repose, and are in fact growing quite thin and pale with your restless running and hurrying, reckoning and writing."

"One must gather in the harvest when it is ripe," replied Jack. "Winter surprises him who neglects it. When we have finished, we shall have time enough for resting."

After a few months of unwearied activity, at last every parcel of the ship's cargo was disposed of, and by so doing Jack had realized an immense profit, and well-nigh doubled the capital invested in the enterprise. His mission was fulfilled, he could return with a sackful of money, and Captain Brook also expected nothing less. Blithely he rubbed his hands, when Jack communicated to him the information that the business was happily brought to a close.

"Then the word shall be: away to the East, to Old England," said he. "Well, you will be received with a friendly face, Mr. Bridewell. That I will answer for. We will then crowd sail, to cross over in the shortest time possible."

"Not yet! not so fast, captain," rejoined Jack pensively. "It is true that our transactions have been successful, but if we are not afraid of the trouble, we can engage in others that will be still more profitable."

"Indeed, how so, sir?" asked the captain, somewhat startled. "You surely have nothing more to sell."

"Certainly not, captain, but ready money enough, and more than enough, for making purchases."

"Zounds!" cried the captain, opening his

eyes widely. "Have you any orders to that. effect?"

"I have not," replied Jack; "but I deem it my duty to work for the advantage of my master, even without an especial charge."

"But by that you are doubling your labour. Every one else in your place would be glad to be able to return, after having ably and conscientiously fulfilled his commission, and you wish to charge yourself with a new burden, and quite of your own accord. I should conceive that it would be more comfortable to be sitting at home warm and safe in the counting-house, than to be contending here with wind and weather, and all sorts of people."

"Comfortable or not, the trouble ought not to be feared or refused, captain," replied Jack. "The truest and best comfort is afforded by the consciousness of having performed one's duty to the best of one's power. Mr. Westmore counts on our zeal, he has placed the whole business in our hands, and given us no further directions than to attend to his interests to the best of our ability. Now then, captain, will you shun labour and trouble,

when the object is to justify such a confidence? We can load home with coffee, to-bacco, and sugar. The prices are unprecedentedly low. If with God's help we convey the cargo safely to England, Mr. Westmore will undoubtedly do a highly profitable business. What! shall we allow him to forfeit all this, when it costs us only some exertion and a little perseverance, to secure for him an important advantage? Nothing is yet known in Europe of the low prices that rule here, so that there is an opportunity of doing a good stroke of business. You will not hinder me from it, I know you too well for that."

"Well then, zounds! I am your man!" replied Captain Brook in his rough, openhearted manner. "I certainly did rejoice very sincerely at the thoughts of our return, for in Old England it is infinitely better than on these hot fever-coasts, where one cannot draw a breath of fresh air; but I will be no obstacle in your way, for after all, you have the greatest amount of trouble and labour in the business. In God's name, then, forwards! But let me tell you, little man, if I were Mr.

Westmore, I would have you set in gold from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet. Fancy! an Englishman might quietly sail home, and yet he wanders about for weeks longer in this infernal climate!"

Jack was much pleased with the willingness of the captain; the sailors, who made wry faces and began to murmur when they heard of the postponement of their return, were won by kind words and the promise of a handsome additional reward, if they would continue to do their duty, so that everything was now arranged, and he was able again to plunge into the turmoil of affairs. This he did with all the zeal which constantly animated him, whenever the question was to prove his faithfulness, and larger stores of coffee, sugar, and tobacco daily accumulated in the ship. purchases were effected even more speedily than Jack himself had ventured to hope. paid in ready money, and the stocks of the planters in the Brazils and the West Indian Islands were so large, that they willingly emptied their granaries for specie. weeks earlier than Jack had calculated, the

ship was laden from top to bottom with bags of coffee, bales of tobacco, hogsheads of sugar, and other valuable productions of the tropics, and the captain gave his decided opinion that there was enough on board, if they did not wish to imperil! the safety of the ship. Jack was at last obliged to satisfy himself, and with swelling sails the vessel glided on its homeward course over the bright blue sea. The sailors huzzaed and sang, the captain simpering rubbed his hands, and Jack in a low voice said to himself: "Thank God, I have done my duty, and can with a good conscience present myself to my master."

"By Heaven, that you can!" exclaimed the captain, who had heard the gently murmured words. "And I'll be hanged if a better supercargo than you ever trod the boards of a ship."

Jack, blushing, withdrew from these praises. But in his heart he was contented and happy, for his conscience was free from every reproach.

#### CHAPTER IX.

#### A NEW PARTNER.

FTER a long voyage Jack finally reached the goal of his longings and wishes. His native land rose up be-

fore his eyes out of the sea, the richly-freighted ship ran into the port, the anchors were dropped, and with a light heart Jack went on shore. A letter apprised Mr. Westmore of his return. Jack gave an accurate account of his successful transactions, and asked for instructions with regard to the goods and moneys which he had brought with him.

Mr. Westmore answered curtly. Jack was simply directed to pay in the sums of money to a firm with which they were connected in Liverpool, to deposit the cargo in granaries and stores, and then, accompanied by the captain, within a week after the reception of the letter to betake himself home. The letter was signed "Westmore and Co." It contained not a word either of praise or blame, and Jack was therefore considerably perplexed by it. He had expected something more than a dry business letter; he believed that he had merited at least a kind acknowledgment of his faithful exertions, and now he received nothing further than a few brief orders.

"Alas!" said he to the captain, handing to him the letter, "I much fear that Mr. Westmore is dissatisfied with me, perhaps because I have exceeded his orders."

The captain read the two or three lines which the letter contained, and gave vent to his feelings by a coarse seaman's expression.

"The devil take it!" said he then, contemptuously throwing the letter on the table. "Pretty trash that! Not a syllable more than 'Do this and do that.' No welcome, no 'thanks for faithful and zealous endeavouring'—no anything, in a word! But all right! I am to go with you, and I'll open Mr. Westmore's eyes. By Heaven! that I will; and

speak out plainly, even if he dismisses me from his service for it. No doubt, the new partner who signs with him is the cause of the whole business. Only think! he has found his way into the warm nest whilst we were bidding defiance to storms and the burning sun, and we—well, we have done our duty, and that is our whole reward. But the company shall not get out of it so easily! I will make it clear to them what it is to toil and blister one's skin on tropical coasts, and then Mr. Westmore shall soon pretty plainly see that we have done a little bit more than our duty. Confound it!"

"Quiet, old friend, quiet!" was the gentle and soothing answer of Jack, who had in the meantime got over his mortification and disappointment. "Who knows, perhaps Mr. Westmore was very much engaged just at the time at which he received my letter, or he has some motive or other for writing to us more briefly than is pleasing to us, and eventually all is sure to be right. The principal thing is, and always will be, that we have no reproaches to make to ourselves, but that we can say to our-

selves with a good conscience, that we have done our duty to the best of our power."

"Certainly, that is the principal thing; but still it ought at least to be acknowledged," replied the captain morosely. "But patience; they shall soon hear there what perhaps will not be pleasing to them."

With these words he went away, still angrily muttering to himself.

Jack meantime suppressed, by a powerful effort, even the last remains of his vexation, and hastened to execute the commissions with which Mr. Westmore had charged him. If he wished to have finished in the few days which were allowed him, and to present himself at the appointed time to his principal, he must keep steadily to his work. So, if not with his wonted cheerfulness (for Mr. Westmore's cold business letter constantly lay heavy at his heart), yet with his accustomed zeal, he proceeded to business, and everything was done to the slightest tittle, when at last he took his seat in the carriage and started for home.

Captain Brook was in an ill-humour, and spoke but little. Jack, too, kept rather silent,

and pondered, not without solicitude, on the reception which he would meet with on the part of Mr. Westmore. It is true that he had done what he thought he should be able, under all circumstances, to answer for, but still the clouds of anxiety passed heavily over his mind. So many changes must have taken place at home—the signature of the principal—"Westmore and Co."—revealed that clearly enough; and Jack feared that the change, as far as he himself was concerned, might not exactly be a change for the better.

Thus the two travellers arrived home not in the best frame of mind. Evening was already darkly closing in, when they drove through the streets and stopped before the beautiful house of Mr. Westmore. Jack was surprised to see all the windows of the upper story illuminated, which was accustomed to take place only on especially festive occasions.

"I almost think that we have come at an unseasonable hour," said he to the captain. "Perhaps we should do better not to announce our arrival till early to-morrow morning."

The captain nodded assent, and Jack was on the point of ordering the coachman to drive on farther. But it was already too late. The door was suddenly opened, a stream of light glanced forth from it, and Mr. Westmore himself stepped to the carriage-door.

"Jack! Captain Brook! Is it you?" said he, in the heartiest of tones. "Yes, really! Welcome! A thousand times welcome, my friends! Yes, I felt sure that you would duly arrive; for I know well the punctuality of my worthy book-keeper. Again welcome, heartily welcome, my dear Jack!"

The friendly tone, the heartiness which was expressed in Mr. Westmore's words, dispelled at once all the mists which had till now darkened Jack's mind, and the brightest sunshine again lighted his soul.

"God bless you, sir!" said he rejoiced, and sprang lightly out of the carriage. "You make me quite happy now that you receive me so kindly. I was very much afraid that you were dissatisfied with me."

"With you, you crown and jewel of the collective book-keepers of the land! How silly, my dear Jack!" replied Mr. Westmore, laughing heartily, and warmly pressing Jack's hand. "But come into the house! Come in, captain! Everything is now ready for your reception."

"But would it not be better," said Jack, hesitating, "if we waited till to-morrow? It seems as if you had, or expected, company; perhaps a festive occasion——"

"Rightly guessed, my clever Jack!" replied Mr. Westmore, with a peculiar smile. "Grand company and a very festive occasion. We are celebrating the installation of my new partner, and for that reason I wrote to you that you were to be here without fail to-day. My first book-keeper certainly ought not to be absent on such an occasion. So, again I say, walk in! Forwards, captain! Rooms are prepared for both of you, and I grant you a whole hour to refresh yourselves and to dress for a gala-day. Forwards, forwards!"

Then certainly nothing further was to be done, and a longer delay would have been very ill-timed. A servant with lights led the way, and the two new-comers were ushered into the best guest-chambers that the house

afforded. The captain, hitherto so morose, looked quite delighted at all this.

"Well, Mr. Bridewell, affairs seem to put on a widely different and better appearance since we have been here," said he. "After all, what you said was right, and I wronged Mr. Westmore. But I must say that that was a confoundedly dry letter which he wrote to you. I am now only curious about the new Mr. Company!"

"I am also exceedingly eager to make his acquaintance," answered Jack. "It is true that I have seen that Mr. Westmore has not withdrawn from me his former goodwill; but, for all that, if my nose or anything else about me displeases the partner, I may easily find myself in an unpleasant position."

"Let us await all quietly, Mr. Bridewell," replied the captain. "I apprehend that the man whom Mr. Westmore takes for his partner must be a perfect gentleman, and good people always prize each other. Your nose will, I am sure, please him, Mr. Bridewell; I will answer for it."

Jack laughed, and his anxiety, if not his

curiosity vanished. Both gentlemen arranged their attire, and had scarcely completed it, when a servant came and invited them to repair to the company, which had assembled in considerable number.

Not without feeling his heart throb, Jack obeyed the summons, and stepped into the drawing-room, which was glowing with light and splendour. The persons who first met him here were Mrs. Westmore and her children. With true motherly kindness, she bade him welcome, and her children received him as a brother.

"I thank God, Mr. Bridewell," said she, "that He has brought you back to us safe and sound. We have very often thought of you, and always with affection."

Jack stammered forth his thanks, and kissed the hand of the kind lady, which was smilingly extended to him. Then came Mr. Westmore, who greeted Jack and the captain with the most affectionate air, and cordially shook them by the hand. Afterwards he led them to the rest of the guests, amongst whom Jack recognised many well-known faces, as

they were mostly the heads of considerable firms with which Mr. Westmore did business. Jack was quite besieged by the visitors, and had to give a relation of his travels and adventures, till a servant announced that dinner was on the They repaired to the dining-room and table. took their places, Jack, in the consciousness of his position, modestly at the lower end of the table, where the rest of the servants and clerks of the house sat. Near the spot in which Mr. Westmore was seated a chair was left empty, probably for the partner, Jack thought. silence he wondered that he was not yet introduced to him, and vainly sought to guess who it could possibly be.

They ate, they drank, they chatted and laughed—the banquet was coming to an end—and still the chair near Mr. Westmore remained unoccupied, and no partner showed himself.

All at once Mr. Westmore rose with a solemn countenance, all conversation was hushed, and full of expectancy, the eyes of all were fixed on the face of the master of the house.

"My friends," now began the latter with a loud voice, "it is no ordinary occasion that has induced me to request the honour of your presence. I wish to present to you a man whom I have chosen as an associate in my business, and to whom from this hour I hand over equal rights with myself. This man has for years enjoyed my full confidence, and has never even for one moment deceived it. He is a faithful, good, righteous man, who by his circumspection and activity has well-nigh doubled my property. He is the most attached friend and the most upright servant! But you all know him, and it would therefore be superfluous to allege anything further in his praise. I pray you, raise your glasses, gentlemen, and drink with me to the health of my friend and partner! Long live Jack Bridewell! May he live long and happily, and enjoy the reward of his faithfulness and ability!"

Joyfully all united in the toast; Jack alone sat there, pale and silent, and believed himself bewildered in a strange dream.

"My son! my dear son, how happy you

make me!" said a gentle voice, which awoke him from his abstraction.

His mother hung on his neck, and bedewed him with tears of happiness and joy. Mr. and Mrs. Westmore came and embraced him. The guests pressed round him to congratulate him, and to shake hands with him. Captain Brook seized him so hard, that he almost dislocated his arm.

"Good luck to you, Mr. Bridewell!" he called out with a powerful, thundering voice, as if he stood on board his ship. "That I do call a pleasing surprise! That we never should have dreamed of! Long live the new partner! Did I not say that your nose would please him? But, by Heaven! Mr. Westmore, you could not have chosen a better associate than this one here. I know him thoroughly. He is pure gold! and I was therefore not a little surprised when you wrote him so curt and dry a letter after his arrival."

"Ay, captain, I did not wish to spoil for myself the pleasure of the surprise."

"Well, in that you succeeded, and a capital surprise it was, that I must say," merrily ex-

claimed the captain. "Gentlemen, one more toast! Long live not only the Company, but also the old firm—Mr. Westmore. Hip, hip, hurrah!"

Again the glasses rang, and Mr. Westmore took his new partner by the arm, and led him to the place of honour by his side, where he was obliged to take his seat on the chair which had hitherto remained empty. The banquet ended in happiness and joy.

Jack was in an ecstasy of bliss, and with eyes beaming with delight, answered the glances of his mother, which rested tenderly on her beloved son. With pride and pleasure she looked up to him and blessed him, and prayed for him in her heart.

\* \* \* \* \*

An affair of business led our Jack some years later to London. Walking one day through the streets near the port, he remarked a concourse of people, and went nearer. A spectacle which deeply moved him, and filled him with grief and horror, presented itself to his eyes. An old woman with white hair and

a deeply-furrowed face full of sorrow, in the most wretched garb of a beggar, sat on a curbstone at the corner of the street, and before her in the dust writhed a man, whose hands and feet were fettered with chains. He hid his face in the lap of the old beggar, out of whose half-extinguished eyes big tears trickled down on his head.

Jack knew neither the woman nor the man in front of her in the prison-dress, but the sight of them filled him with sorrow and compassion.

"What is the meaning of this?" he inquired of a man who wore the uniform of a policeman, and who seemed to be guarding the man in chains.

"An unfortunate story, sir," courteously replied the man. "I was on the point of conveying the prisoner here to a ship which is to transport him to the penal colony at Botany Bay, when he suddenly broke loose from me, and with the cry of 'My mother! my unhappy, poor mother!' rushed to the feet of this old woman!"

"And what crime has the man committed,

to deserve transportation?" further inquired Jack.

"Robbery!" answered the man. "He was in prison before for forgery, released, and caught again, just when, with a man named Ward, he had broken into a tradesman's shop. His accomplice resisted, and was shot down. This one was captured, and his sentence was—transportation for life!"

A gloomy presentiment filled Jack with terror.

"John Collins!" he called out.

The prisoner raised his pale, wasted face, wet with tears, up from the woman's lap, and stared at Jack with bewildered eyes.

"Oh God! this, too!" he groaned. "Jack—sir—look on me! To this state have my laziness and my aversion to work brought me. I am a culprit, my poor guiltless mother a beggar! Oh, would that I had followed your instructions, whilst there was yet time! But I do not complain; I have merited my fate, and the punishment of Heaven is but justice. But she—my mother—that I should know that she must beg in the street in her latter

days, that breaks my heart! Oh! oh!

He groaned pitiably. The sight of him inspired compassion—tears stood in Jack's eyes. Many of the bystanders, too, regarded not without feelings of sympathy John and his mother, the latter of whom, a picture of despair, sat there wringing her hands. The police-officer put an end to the distressing scene.

"Stand up, man!" said he, gently indeed, and without harshness, but with firmness, to John. "I am transgressing my duty, if I allow you to tarry here any longer. You must follow me!"

John obeyed. He fixed one more heartbreaking gaze on the face of his unhappy mother, pressed his trembling lips on her withered hands, and tore himself away with a painful, hollow groan. His mother wept and wailed aloud.

"My son, my son, I forgive you!" she cried to him as he left, and then sank her head in a swoon.

"Take care of her, I will come back

directly," cried Jack imploringly to the bystanders, and hastened after John.

"One consolation at least you shall take with you across the sea," he said to him in a low tone. "Your mother shall no longer be a beggar, to seek her bread in the streets. I will take care of her, for that you have my word."

"Thanks, and God's blessing on your head, Mr. Bridewell!" replied John, deeply moved. "Yes, that is really a consolation! Oh, why did I not listen to you when you warned me, and wished to lead me into the path of virtue? Now it is too late, and all repentance is useless! May Heaven grant me pardon, and you all happiness, which I have thrown away through sloth and idleness!"

A sign from the police-officer put an end to this dialogue. John was obliged to follow him, and Jack returned to the poor mother, whom he conducted in a carriage to the place of his abode. He made such provision for her declining age, that she had no longer reason to fear the want of anything.

"Alas, Mr. Bridewell," she said to him, when

he afterwards took leave of her. "You and my unhappy son can rightly serve as a proof that God rewards every one according to his works and deeds. You, once the poor man, are now rich and honoured; he, the rich one, is poor and a malefactor! These are the consequences of laziness and frivolity; those the results of honest industry and sincere faith in the Lord! God bless you, sir, and reward you for the good that you do to me, an aged woman."

Jack parted from the poor mother with a tear of compassion, and still very often thought of her and her unhappy son beyond the ocean.

But you, reader, choose! choose between Industry and Laziness! You have seen the consequences and the results. Can you hesitate in your choice?

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